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WALDEN: A STUDY OF STYLE

by



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A Thesis

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The undersigned certify that they have read and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled WALDEN: A STUDY OF STYLE, submitted by Kamal Dev Verma in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

Chapter I presents a framework of literary principles and characteristics governing the organic form and a personal and subjective style, against which the present study has been undertaken. The discussion traces the impact of the romantic-transcendental aesthetics, particularly Thoreau's own, on artistic thought and process, and the relationship between the artist's vision and its execution. Thoreau had his own rigorous and fastidious standard of achieving that "eternal quality" in a work of art, which results from a profound and powerful vision and a timeless and arduous effort and process. The chapter also includes a brief review of some of the important studies which touch directly or indirectly on Thoreau's style in Walden.

Chapter II pertains to the discussion of words and sentences as units of expression of Thoreau's profound vision. It has been shown how Thoreau, in order to gain the forcefulness and vitality in his expression, perhaps corresponding to the strength of his vision, employs deliberate artistry both in the choice and arrangement of words, and in the construction of sentences. Examined are some of the most frequently used rhetorical and other devices that lend to the overall effectiveness of words and sentences, and, hence, expression.

Chapter III presents an analysis of imagery and symbolism in Walden. It has been demonstrated that the metaphors and symbols are of the "creative tradition"; they are expressive of the mythic consciousness and design; and, above all, they portray Thoreau's transcendental vision of cosmic unity and oneness. With the help of metaphors, symbols and



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resulting imagery, Thoreau gives a "poetic veil" to the expression and meaning in Walden. It has been shown that the entire Walden experience, the entire vision, is incorporated in the central symbol of the Walden Pond, and that the factual and mythical, the natural and historical are brilliantly transfigured into the symbolic. The imagery is vivid, sensuous and concrete; it reinforces the central theme of inner exploration and purification.

Studied in Chapter IV are various techniques of the narrative and the nature and quality of the argument as a means of tracing and ascertaining the inner "development" and "shaping" in Walden. The discussion relates to the interaction of the narrative and the argument, their evolutionary quality, and their effect on thought and expression. Such deliberate narrative techniques as arrangement and organization, intermixture of description, critical and ironical interludes, anecdotes and poetized accounts, and several others are extensively employed. At the same time, it has been shown how Thoreau, with the help of multiple devices of rhetoric and logic, makes the polemic extremely subtle and challenging. Such matters as unity, coherence and consistency of thought and expression have also been discussed.

Chapter V includes a brief summation of the conclusions arrived at in each chapter. It has been shown how style is vital to the execution of a work of art and how the study of style is pertinent to the true and meaningful interpretation and appreciation of the total meaning in Walden.

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CHAPTER I

STYLE AND THE STYLIST: A LITERARY PERSPECTIVE

Though Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman subscribe in a way to the common core of transcendental thought, they differ in their choice of literary objectives, techniques and practices. The variations are rather too conspicuous to go unnoticed. Emerson as the recognized "lead" excelled more in exploring the various phases of epistemological idealism than in producing a work of art that would be compatible with his philosophy and aesthetics. Yet his works, more particularly the essay on "Nature" and the address contained in "The American Scholar," made a strong impact on the budding writers. To many of them Emerson's proclamations on nature were irresistible and provocative:

Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have a poetry and philosophy of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs? Embosomed for a season in nature, whose floods of life stream around and through us, and invite us by the powers they supply, to action proportioned to nature, why should we grope among the dry bones of the past, or put the living generation into masquerade out of its faded wardrobe?¹

Emerson clearly implies that a poetic vision of "insight" and "revelation" would only result from "an original relation to the universe." The original relation, as Emerson contemplates, is the living and direct experience with nature — a total and comprehensive experience when "nature in its ministry to man, is not only the material, but is also the process and the result."² No doubt nature was a unique and primary source of nourishment for poetic thought, but such an accomplishment would essentially rest on

the process of intuition and meditation. Out of an intuitive and meditative communication between nature and the artist would grow the poetic urge for the appreciation and recreation of Beauty. The response of the soul to the "totality in nature," to the "perfectness and harmony" is the perception of that eternal beauty which is manifest in the inner self. The position was more emphatically stated by Emerson:

The problem of restoring to the world original and eternal beauty is solved by the redemption of the soul. The ruin or the blank that we see when we look at nature, is in our own eye. The axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque. The reason why the world lacks unity, and lies broken and in heaps, is because man is disunited with himself.³

The emphasis was on the moral and spiritual regeneration of the individual. At the same time this was a more eloquent and lucid elaboration of the nature creed of Wordsworth and the German transcendentalism of Coleridge and Carlyle. Nature was a reservoir of elements, a teacher, a purifier, a liberator, a companion and a friend.

Inspired by Emersonian philosophy and aesthetics, Thoreau was determined to experience "an original relation to the universe" and, thus, discover and develop his own self. By the time Thoreau went to live at Walden Pond, his previous encounters with nature had afforded him the experience of seeing his inner self reflected in the myriad forms of nature, of knowing and elevating that self to the higher level of spirituality, of perceiving continuity and unity in all beautiful forms, and of establishing harmony between his soul and the universe by natural austerity and asceticism. Thoreau's quest was far deeper and intenser than Emerson's. It was an incessant quest for truth, for creativity, for

divine reality, for purity. It was a lifelong exploration to discern the mysterious nature of the infinite through continuous contact with the finite — a search for identity.

Thoreau's transcendental aesthetic is essentially rooted in the faculties of sense-perception, imagination and intuition. To a query, "What a faculty must that be which can paint the most barren landscape and humblest life in glorious colors!", Thoreau's explanation of the functioning of this artistic process is rather explicit and definitive:

It is pure and invigorated senses reacting on a sound and strong imagination. Is not that the poet's case? The intellect of most men is barren. They neither fertilize nor are fertilized. It is the marriage of the soul with Nature that makes the intellect fruitful, that gives birth to imagination.⁴

The purity of sense-experience is an expression of the inner purity which is a necessary condition for the direct and speedy communication of this sensory experience to the higher levels of perception and cognition. In his translation of the Harivansa, Thoreau refers to the corrupting and degenerating effect of sensuality: "The spirit led astray by the senses, in the midst of the creation of Brahma, engages itself in works and knows birth, as well as death."⁵ Emerson, too, states the difference between the poet and the sensualist: "The sensual man conforms thoughts to things; the poet conforms things to his thoughts. The one esteems nature as rooted and fast; the other, as fluid, and impresses his being thereon."⁶ The act of observation however must be full and thorough, not merely temporary, physical or partial, but forcefully and vigorously grasped and responded by the inner self. Thoreau would not trust an "ecstatic mood" or "a mere fulness of life" as adequate for the

communication of poetic truth.⁷ Such evanescent visions and moments must be transcended and made a permanent part of experience. It is the intensity and depth of one's genuine and living experience with the natural phenomena that sparks contemplation -- a process which, when seriously accomplished, will render even "the simple, cheap, and homely themes," suitable for poetic creation. As Thoreau affirms:

All that interests the reader is the depth and intensity of the life excited. We touch our subject but by a point which has no breadth, but the pyramid of our experience, or our interest in it, rests on us by a broader or narrower base. That is, man is all in all, Nature nothing, but as she draws him out and reflects him.⁸

Hence, the analogous process of creation and growth in nature was used by Thoreau as a mode of examining his own. Contemplation and meditation on these processes provided him with "ready-made" affirmations of truth -- "sentences, -- statements or opinions."⁹ Whereas the point of centrality is the self and the point of contact or relationship is the external world, that is, the objective reality, the creative process is essentially centripetal-centrifugal. The gist of Thoreau's aesthetics perhaps lies in the following passage from the Harivansa:

Free in this world, as the birds in the air, disengaged from every kind of chain.
Thus the Yogin, absorbed in contemplation, contributes for his part to creation: he breathes a divine perfume, he hears wonderful things. Divine forms traverse him without tearing him, and united to the nature which is proper to him, he goes, he acts, as animating original matter.¹⁰

Thoreau at least sincerely and honestly tried to tread the path of a Yogin-artist. He was continuously gaining depth and intensity of poetic vision. He continued search for the "eternal verities" ended only with his

life. As the world for Blake was "a World of Imagination & Vision", "all One continued Vision,"¹¹ so, indeed, it was for Thoreau. As Blake's imagination, distinguished from Coleridge's esemplastic imagination, is a "Spiritual Sensation," so is Thoreau's, but with one major departure and that is Thoreau's whole concept of going to nature, especially his devotional emphasis on the concrete and specific in nature as an initial phase of cosmological and universal vision. Both Emerson and Thoreau would have readily agreed with Blake: "Some see Nature all Ridicule & Deformity, & by these I shall not regulate my proportions; & some scarce see Nature at all. But to the Eyes of the man of Imagination, Nature is Imagination itself."¹²

With writers like Thoreau, it is difficult to treat their works as mere stylistic adventures. Since a work of art grows out of a highly personal and subjective experience, it cannot be treated as an objective entity. Its style is as subjective and personal as the nature of experience; this type of style is an integral part of an artist's personality. Art as an "expression of truth of spiritual being" cannot be otherwise. Thoreau's works, more particularly Walden and A Week are spiritual biographies — artistic renderings of the journeys of inner exploration. Thoreau's preferred choice of biography as the only form suitable for his thought and experience is an evidence of his superb literary artistry and craftsmanship. However, the form thus chosen was not just "the dress of thoughts," but it was, to use Wordsworth's expression, "the incarnation of thoughts." As language with Wordsworth in The Prelude, or elsewhere, is "the incarnation of thoughts," so it is for Thoreau in Walden. The

style of Walden is personal, subjective and biographical.

If it is granted that all genuine art (except certain types belonging to the "mimetic tradition" which employs "metaphors of objective order"¹⁴) is subjective, the artistic expression of a subjective experience will only be in the personal manner. Indeed, in the process, the style and the thought get fused and become inseparable. De Quincey explains this fusion:

Whatsoever is entirely independent of the mind, and external to it, is generally equal to its own enunciation. Ponderable facts and external realities are intelligible in almost any language: they are self-explained and self-sustained. But, the more closely any exercise of mind is connected with what is internal and individual in the sensibilities, — that is, with what is philosophically termed subjective, — precisely in that degree, and the more subtly, does the style or the embodying of the thoughts cease to be a mere separable ornament, and in fact the more does the manner, as we expressed it before, become confluent with the matter.¹⁵

De Quincey has referred to the condition in the artistic process when the style ceases to be "a mere separable ornament". Style as an ornament is an artificiality, a belaboured external pattern, a temporary "dress of thoughts." It is anything but genuine, true and integral, and is readily dispensable; it has missed somewhere the basic postulate, of being the true representation of one's thoughts and total self. An artificial style not only lacks sublimity, but also fails in the communication of truth and beauty. It reveals only the ironic shallowness of the artist's false and pretended situation. A genuine style, on the contrary, is

the living body of thought, not a costume that can be put on and off; it is the expression of the writer's mind; it is not less

the incarnation of his thoughts in verbal symbols than a picture is the painter's incarnation of his thoughts in symbols of form and colour.¹⁶

Here, too, style as "the living body of thought" is a personal and subjective phenomenon; it is inseparable from thought.

Contrasted to this is Flaubert's experiment with the form as the work itself. Flaubert's commentator sums up his position:

Styles, as so many peculiar moulds, each of which bears the mark of a particular writer, who is to pour into it the whole content of his ideas, were no part of his theory. What he believed in was Style: that is to say, a certain absolute and unique manner of expressing a thing, in all its intensity and colour. For him the form was the work itself. As in living creatures, the blood, nourishing the body, determines its very contour and external aspect, just so, to his mind, the matter, the basis, in a work of art, imposed, necessarily, the unique, the just expression. the measure, the rhythm -- the form in all its characteristics.¹⁷

It was a search for an impersonal and objective style, an absolute style, an eternal value, — free from the bondage of time, but with an entirely misplaced concentration on the form, ignoring the thought altogether. The timelessness of a work of art does not depend merely on the form but on "a very fundamental need; that of beholding ourselves in our widest possible intelligibility, in our most stable, our most universal aspect, beyond the fluctuations of history, beyond the local and specific limitations."¹⁸ Style as an absolute "expresses the eternal stable, universal intelligibility of man,"¹⁹ where intelligibility is a condition or quality "whose symbolical articulation shows it to be a spiritual truth of being."²⁰ Flaubert ignored this condition of the fundamental urge as a prerequisite, a basis, for an adequate form. Middleton Murry even doubts if he rightly interpreted Buffon's principle: "The Style is the man."²¹ That for "every

thought or grace or wonder", there was only one corresponding "word or phrase exactly adapted to express it", was the passion of his life. "Perhaps in his search after style," remarks Edmund Gosse, "he went too far, losing something of that simplicity and inevitability which is the charm of natural writing."²²

Thoreau's own position seems rather ambiguous when he emphatically yet paradoxically advocates a style "in which the matter is all, and the manner nothing at all."²³ Let us consider the complex passage which precedes this epigrammatic conclusion:

When facts are seen superficially, they are seen as they lie in relation to certain institutions, perchance. But I would have them expressed as more deeply seen, with deeper references; so that the hearer or reader cannot recognize them or apprehend their significance from the platform of common life, but it will be necessary that he be in a sense translated in order to understand them; when the truth respecting his things shall naturally exhale from a man like the odor of the muskrat from the coat of the trapper. At first blush a man is not capable of reporting truth; he must be drenched and saturated with it first. What was enthusiasm in the young man must become temperament in the mature man. Without excitement, heat, or passion, he will survey the world which excited the youth and threw him off his balance. As all things are significant, so all words should be significant. It is a fault which attaches to the speaker, to speak flippantly or superficially of anything. Of what use are words which do not move the hearer, — are not oracular and fateful?²⁴

Thoreau would employ simple, observable facts as "deeper references" for the natural exhaling of truth. Before being able to communicate the truth one must be "drenched and saturated with it." Sentimentality, flippancy and superficiality are decried and balance and contemplation are emphasized. When the experience has become a part of the self, the communication resulting from such a process must be "oracular and fateful." Surely, the

artistic process is dependent upon one's perception and contemplation of experience and reality. Yet, is not Thoreau dwelling on the quality and mode of integral and organic expression? But, what Thoreau probably implies by "A Style in which the matter is all in all. . ." is that qualities such as truth, vitality and genuineness in one's expression spring from the inner strength and greatness and that the expression takes its form accordingly, i.e., an effective and genuine style emerges from adequate matter. In this respect, Thoreau seems to be closer to Longinus's view that "Great words issue, and it cannot be otherwise, from those whose thoughts are weighty,"²⁵ and that great thoughts are produced "by the greatness of man's soul."²⁶

It is the profundity of thought and uniqueness of vision of the universe and reality that go to the making of a great writer.²⁷ It is the matter, and not the form, that distinguishes great art from good art. "It is on the quality of the matter," observes Pater, "it [great art] informs or controls, its compass, its variety, its alliance to great ends, or the depth of the note of revolt, or the largeness of hope in it, that the greatness of literary art depends, as The Divine Comedy, Paradise Lost. . .are great art."²⁸ But how is that inner subtlety transposed into an effective expression without any substantive loss? How is that superstructure which is at once an embodiment of truth and beauty born? How does the writer incorporate the "mind" and the "soul-fact"²⁹ into his writings? And while doing so, how does the artist achieve, and to what extent, that eternal quality of "intelligibility," that index to the "soul-culture," which consists of excellence, harmony and the sublime? All

these queries admit no single answer, but they certainly direct our attention to the important question of style as being extremely relevant to the total work of art. One nearly comes close to sharing Lewes's assertion: "It is not enough that a man has clearness of Vision, and reliance on Sincerity, he must also have the art of Expression, or he will remain obscure."³⁰ No doubt, the matter and style are integral and inseparable, or even let us concede that the superiority of style depends on the corresponding superiority of thought, but in order to criticize and to find some specific answers to the above queries we must separate them.

As the process of poetic thought is subjective and personal, so is all rhetoric. As the writer develops his imagination and acquires a cosmic vision, there emerges in him a strong inner sensibility, "the sum total of awareness, ordained and ordered to some specific end or object of attention,"³¹ which quality is "no innate instinct, but a conscious achievement."³² This quality is "more than character, because it necessarily implies intelligence; and it is more than personality, because it necessarily implies a world of absolute ideals."³³ It is the inner spirit, that unique faculty — what Coleridge terms as the "predominant passion" of a poet, or what Read calls the "sacred rage" in the case of Henry James — which leads one towards an unequivocal commitment and dedication, which modifies, or so to say, crystallizes all modes of rhetoric: words, syntax, metaphors and images, narration and exposition, thought and sensibility, thus making them "proofs of original genius."³⁴ In so far as a great writer possesses this "predominant passion" or "sacred rage" and chooses to live in the "world of absolute ideals," he

acquires the artistic excellence of execution by a continuous process of modification and crystallization. It is in this context that Herbert Read observes: "a great writer is always a good stylist." Profound thought and good style, we are told, "are not separable and distinct virtues, but two aspects of one reality. The thought seems to mould and accentuate the style and the style reacts to mould and accentuate the thought. It is one process of creation, one art, one aim."³⁵ As De Quincey also explains that in the case of poetic thoughts the confluence of the style with the matter is like an "ineffable" union of the body and the soul, "a mysterious incarnation"— "each co-existing not merely with the other, but each in and through the other."³⁶

Hence, it follows that if the work of art communicates beauty and truth, if it demonstrates unity, coherence and continuity, such and whatever other qualities it may communicate are manifestations not of the outer but of inner self. Such a style, a perfect correspondence between the inner and outer, is perhaps what Schopenhauer described as "the physiognomy of the soul,"³⁷ or to use the Renaissance phrase, "mentis character."³⁸ This is the only true, original and genuine style, approximating the conditions of an absolute and eternal quality. A study of this type of style should naturally reveal the writer's "predominant passion", his vision, his "world of absolute ideals", his aesthetics and his related strengths and weaknesses. Language, in this sense, becomes the full mental picture of the artist.³⁹

A highly developed personal style is a rare accomplishment. As discussed earlier, it is a conscious achievement, a discipline cultivated

as an integral part. Whatever taste is developed; whatever mark of excellence is set; whatever consonance with tradition is established; — all these are the effects of the personal modes and practices warranted by the nature of "original impulse" which is brought to bear on the microcosmic experience. As the writer successfully gains control over the language to express his emotional and intellectual experience, there is an evidence of "true idiosyncrasy"; but as he shows laxity or failure, by letting whimsical, sentimental or artificial habits of expression cripple the "original impulse" as well as the artistic process, there is the case of "false" or "barren" idiosyncrasy which flashes irksome symptoms of superficiality, disunity and disintegration.⁴⁰ Whenever an effort is made to transcend the natural limits of language ("hypertrophy of style"⁴¹), or to express what is foreign and disproportionate to one's experience ("atrophy of style"⁴²), the style not only lacks vitality and genuineness, but is also offensive to good taste. It is violence with the language as well as with the self.

One fearful result of such a style is that the writer serves in bondage to its glittering temptations and forfeits his freedom. How can the writer avoid being victim of the diseases of hypertrophy and atrophy and be able to ply his way clearly through to the dome of success? Pater's answer that in style the mind or the constructive intelligence brings "original unity" and "vital wholeness" to the superstructure raised on what exists in the soul, is rather convincing.⁴³ However, it is the "soul-fact" which instils greatness into a work of art. The constructive intelligence, in the process, eliminates all "surplusage" and "terrible

waste." De Quincey's solution lies in the proper understanding of the "organology" and "mechanology" of the style.⁴⁴

Both Emerson and Thoreau had firmly grasped Coleridge's idea of the organic form. For Emerson particularly, the "wholeness of nature" was a mode of perceiving and exploring growth and identity in the self. Language as a vehicle of this experience and thought must achieve a living correspondence between the natural facts and the self.⁴⁵ This type of prophetic and contemplative thought which aims at discovering the mysteries of reality and existence has the "discontinuous aphoristic style"⁴⁶ — for the intensity and revelatory nature of the thought disposes it from its apparent continuity. This should help in explaining the charge of the lack of consecutiveness in the prose of transcendental writers generally and of Emerson particularly. As a rhetoric of wisdom Emerson's prose is witty and epigrammatic. His "bullet-like" words convey the necessary force and truth. He preferred colloquialism to intellectualized formalism though his liberation from it never became complete.⁴⁷ Like De Quincey he searched for that "pure racy idiom of colloquial or household English," which could only be found "in the circles of well-educated women not too closely connected with books."⁴⁸ Yet one notices some strange peculiarities in Emerson's prose style, certain basic violations of rhetoric and composition, which perhaps warrants the commonly voiced criticism that he was careless in the matters of "mechanology" of the style.⁴⁹ Let us consider the following passage:

The world thus exists to the soul to satisfy the desire of beauty. This element I call an ultimate end. No reason can

be asked or given why the soul seeks beauty. Beauty, in its largest and profoundest sense, is one expression for the universe. God is the all-fair. Truth and goodness and beauty are but different faces of the same All. But beauty in nature is not ultimate. It is the herald of inward and internal beauty, and is not alone a solid and satisfactory good. It must stand as a part, and not as yet the last or highest expression of the final cause of Nature.⁵⁰

As it is evident, there is hardly any transition from one sentence to another. Each sentence is aphoristic and eloquent, but it seems to stand aloof. There is little evidence of order. The too many "sweeping" generalizations mitigate the ease and smoothness of the passage. However, in spite of these shortcomings, Emerson does succeed in forging the freshness and vitality of thought.

What Ezra Pound said of Whitman's poetry may also be true of his prose:

The only way to enjoy Whitman thoroughly is to concentrate on his fundamental meaning. If you insist, however, on dissecting his language you will probably find that it is wrong NOT because he broke all of what were considered in his day 'the rules' but because he is spasmodically conforming to this, that or the other; sporadically dragging in a bit of 'regular' metre, using a bit of literary language, and putting his adjectives where, in the spoken tongue, they are not. His real writing occurs when he gets free of all this barbed wire.⁵¹

Whitman's disengagement with the formal and traditional literary form was only appropriate to the nature of his thought and aesthetics. He believed that there was hardly any difference between the language of prose and the language of poetry. Henry James's remarks about Whitman's prose of his letters: "there is not even by accident a line with a hint of style — it is all flat, familiar, illiterate colloquy,"⁵² though somewhat applicable to his other prose writing, may sound too harsh. Here is a

passage from the "Preface to 1855 Edition of 'Leaves of Grass':"

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus . . . he does not stop for any regulations . . . he is the president of regulation. What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. Who knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves, but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world. A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning.⁵³

It reads more or less like his poetry. There is enough of simplicity of language to make the passage comprehensible, but hardly any economy. Obviously, too, the style of the passage is aphoristic discontinuous. The rugged rhythm of the lines stands in contrast to Thoreau's or Melville's drop and modulations. But one can hardly miss the force and vitality of the prophetic note and the strong and persuasive pulpit-rhetoric.

Both Hawthorne and Thoreau were far more careful artists than either Emerson or Whitman. Hawthorne's cultivated style is "as free from the crude as from the far-fetched." "As free from eccentricity or excess as from any particular pungency or color," observes Brownell, "it is eminently the style of literary good-breeding and images its author's personal fastidiousness."⁵⁴ His abstract style was suited "for the expression of a nature without enthusiasm." However, Hawthorne practised a different genre for which Thoreau had no liking; as it did not communicate truth in the same manner as poetry or biography did. In the

matter of style or otherwise even, there is hardly any evidence to suggest Hawthorne's or Melville's influence on Thoreau.

That Thoreau was a conscious artist who understood his commitment and obligation is not to be doubted. He stood solemnly and devoutly by aphoristic affirmation: "My work is writing." As Matthiessen observes: ". . . he was much more of a craftsman than Whitman, much more aware of the necessity of sacrificing himself to the work to be performed. In fact he came to realize, when occupied with Walden, that no 'valuable work' is accomplished except 'at the expense of life'."⁵⁵ For Thoreau perception, thought and expression were integral processes, each one of which must be fully perfected without any loss due to insincere motivation, half-hearted effort, indolence or carelessness. In this regard, Thoreau reiterates his position clearly: "Great Works of art have endless leisure for a background, as the universe has space. Time stands still when they are created. The artist cannot be in [a] hurry. . . . you are expected to do your duty, not in spite of every thing but one, but in spite of everything."⁵⁶ Such a strong self-exhortation is posited against an explicit principle of his aesthetics: "A momentous silence reigns always in the woods, and their meaning seems just ripening into expression. But alas! they make no haste. The rush sparrow, Nature's minstrel of serene hours, sings of an immense leisure and duration."⁵⁷ A work of art is a process, not merely of recounting one's experience, but of gradual recreation.

Perhaps Thoreau had fully realized the implications of his assertion: "Nothing goes by luck in composition. It allows of no tricks. The best you can write will be the best you are."⁵⁸ Thus, such

qualities as plainness, vigour and sincerity in one's expression, what Thoreau calls ornaments of style, are only approximations of the modes of inner realization. If the end of all expression is to state truth,⁵⁹ as it was with Thoreau, the nature of truth must be fully explored. Such a quest for identity and reality and their realization can only be something entirely personal and subjective and so will be its style.⁶⁰ After one has undergone such intense processes of experience, perception and contemplation, the thoughts are ready to flow naturally. But what seems more pertinent and latent in the forementioned statement by Thoreau is his admission that as one tries endlessly to achieve inner perfection, so does one in the matter of composition. Whatever "original impulse" drives an artist for the perfection of poetic vision, the same impulse directs the artist to achieve the corresponding degree of intelligibility — the state of the truth of being. In the six successive revisions of the original text of Walden, Thoreau attempted all sorts of stylistic modifications, deletions, additions and other changes pertaining to words, sentences and paragraphs.⁶¹ Led by his "sacred rage," Thoreau tried to achieve the artistic excellence that would correspond with the inner experience of truth and beauty.

The Yogin-artist is the thinker — "The thinker, he who is serene and self-possessed, is the brave, not the desperate soldier. He who can deal with his thoughts as a material, building them into poems in which future generations will delight, he is the man of the greatest and the rarest vigor, not sturdy diggers and lusty polygamists. He is the man of energy, in whom subtle and poetic thoughts are bred."⁶² However, this

vigour is not the so-called enthusiasm or some sudden instinctive passion but the spiritual and moral strength, that unshakable inner greatness which is developed and sustained by continuous self-annihilation and transcendence. The serenity coupled with self-possession, somewhat comparable to Eliot's dissociation of sensibility, or to "the firmness, the true coldness, the hard coldness of the genuine artist" which Eliot admired in Hawthorne,⁶³ is an accomplishment which helps in obliterating various fads and weaknesses arising from the barren and false idiosyncrasies. This vigour is largely responsible for the heroic nature of Thoreau's utterances. The heroic strain as it runs into Carlyle's writings, or in Emerson's and Whitman's, is perhaps characteristic of the vitality and originality of a seer's vision. It is not egoism as Stevenson understands it,⁶⁴ neither it is metaphysical conceit, but it is, as Thoreau discerns in Carlyle, a "genuine poetic feeling"⁶⁵ with which the poet soars into the higher and mysterious realms of imagination.

Stevenson's objection about the "exaggerative and parabolical" character of Thoreau's writings is based on the latter's alleged departure from "the saner classical tradition" by his preference of the method of direct exaggeration, writing "the whole for the half" to that of "negative exaggeration," selecting the most important and the most interesting.⁶⁶ While Stevenson readily grants the use of exaggeration as a mere device of gaining emphasis, he does not go any further to consider it as a mode of perceptual and imaginative process. For the writers of the creative tradition, it is an integral manner of envisioning and encompassing the encyclopaedic in nature and universe. As Emerson would have us believe:

"The tendency to magnify the moment, to read all the laws of Nature in one subject or one combination under your eye, is of course comic to those who do not share the philosopher's perception of identity. To him there was no such thing as size. The pond was a small ocean; the Atlantic, a large Walden Pond."⁶⁷ Thoreau admired this propensity in Carlyle and came out in its spirited defense: "Exaggeration! was ever any virtue attributed to a man without exaggeration? . . . The lightening is the exaggeration of light. Exaggerated history is poetry, and truth referred to a new standard . . . He who cannot exaggerate is not qualified to utter truth."⁶⁸

Thoreau's prose is often witty and epigrammatic. The trenchant ironies, subtle Donnean paradoxes, neat puns and well-drawn analogies are some of the essential and too-conspicuous characteristics of his rhetoric. To Thoreau, however, both paradox and ingenuity of "using current phrases and maxims" appeared at some length faults of his style.⁶⁹ Emerson's remarks about Thoreau's use of paradox are worth noting: "The habit of a realist to find things the reverse of their appearance inclined him to put every statement in a paradox. A certain habit of antagonism defaced his earlier writings, — a trick of rhetoric not quite outgrown in his later, of substituting for the obvious word and thought its diametrical opposite."⁷⁰

That Thoreau was almost defining himself on matters of style would seem clear from the study of his journals and other writings. In his essay on Carlyle,⁷¹ Thoreau admires the vitality and freshness of thought, the originality of style, the colloquialism, the absence of

pedantry and dilletantism, the "correspondence between the written word and the spoken word and the thought" and several other qualities some of which have been referred to earlier in this discussion. De Quincey's style, we are told, is "nowhere kinked and knotted"; the writers of De Quincey's class lack "moderation and sententiousness"; "their sentences are not concentrated and nutty."⁷² Thoreau searched for that lofty style like Browne's or Walter Raleigh's, which is born only by a skilful combination of vigorous thought and dignified expression. His exacting ideals of excellence in prose writing are eloquently expressed in the following passage:

Great prose, of equal elevation, commands our respect more than great verse, since it implies a more permanent and level height, a life more pervaded with the grandeur of the thought. The poet often only makes an irruption, like a Parthian, and is off again, shooting while he retreats; but the prose writer has conquered like a Roman, and settled colonies.⁷³

And Stevenson could find such a great prose nowhere except in Milton's Areopagitica.⁷⁴

Sherman Paul suggests the mythic nature and basis of Walden.⁷⁵ Not that Thoreau made use of the classical myth itself but "instead, like Whitman and Melville, he created his own by going back to the original conditions of myth."⁷⁶ Viewed against the background of the mythic mode and Emersonian aesthetics, Walden is the language of symbols; it is "a fable of renewal of life."⁷⁷ In his aesthetics Emerson had emphasized the value of mythology as "the literature of reason" and also about the "somewhat divine" character of the fable. The fable, the myth and nature are compounded to suggest the theme of renewal which, in the process of

metamorphosis, emerges from and fuses into the endless ocean of eternity. The reference is of course to the total creative process where correspondence between matter and mind is sought. Not only that, the microcosmic creation must become a part of the macrocosmic totality. This is perfectly in the creative tradition which "makes more use of aural and temporal metaphors, stresses the importance of speaking voice and the evocative quality of rhythm and sound, and has more tolerance for the sense of mystery, obscurity and magic, for explored resources of meaning, and other synonyms for hearing in the dark."⁷⁸ In our study of the style in Walden, such an approach should help us in deciphering and interpreting the symbols, metaphors and imagery in relation to the total vision.

In his book, Henry David Thoreau, Krutch has included a valuable section on "The Style and the Man," which is more or less a general discussion of Thoreau's style in relation to his personality, more particularly his aesthetics and ideals as contained in the Journal. Much of the argument, primarily resting on the biographical details and critical opinions, is directed to emphasize the fact that Thoreau's works exhibit "the oneness" and "the unity of sensibility rather than undercurrent of conflict,"⁷⁹ or any permanent incongruity and split as perhaps suggested by some hostile critics. What Krutch is trying to suggest is that Thoreau's transcendental vision does not entertain any duality, but the treatment falls short of a clear and forceful assertion. However, the section, "Paradise Found" contains some engaging and incisive observations on Thoreau's artistry in Walden. Krutch notes the "orphic strain" and "Emersonian optimism" of the chapter on "Conclusion."⁸⁰ "The

brilliance of that final chapter," observes Krutch, "is pyrotechnic in its effect; one seems to be present at the birth of a whole galaxy of dancing stars. How, the reader is likely asking himself," continues Krutch, "can any writer have been at any given time so sustainedly incandescent? And the answer — which is of course that Thoreau was not . . . "81

Van Doren's Henry David Thoreau: A Critical Study is no doubt mostly biographical, but it tries to place Thoreau in a literary perspective. In his estimate of style, Van Doren specially notes Thoreau's love and genius for the specific and the concrete. We are also told that Thoreau "could be concise in his mysticism."⁸² Among his several other critical observations on Thoreau's style is the following debatable one: "It is not difficult to decide to what school of literary theorists Thoreau belongs. He was a nineteenth-century euphist of the stamp of Flaubert, Stevenson, and Pater; he travailed to catch consciousness itself in the trap of the specific; he wished to express 'himself.'"⁸³ But unfortunately, the observation is not validated. For one thing, as we have noticed earlier, Thoreau does not belong to the school to which either Flaubert or Stevenson belonged. Matthiessen's study of Thoreau as included in American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman still remains the most important and pertinent of all other works, at least for our purpose here. Matthiessen's treatment is unique in the sense that he approaches Thoreau primarily as an artist and tries to gauge his achievements with respect to the major literary tendencies of the age. The discussion of Thoreau's art, especially the chapter

on "Walden: Craftsmanship vs. Technique," is extremely relevant to our understanding of style in Walden. Shanley's The Making of Walden acquaints us with Thoreau's several attempts at revising and rewriting of Walden before it was finally published. However, it must be pointed out that no full-length study of style in Walden has so far been undertaken.

We have thus far discussed various theories of style, with special reference to the theory and practice of the period to which Thoreau belonged. There is no one theory, no single approach in the matter of style. It is personal and subjective, particularly in the case of writers like Thoreau. It has been shown that Thoreau believed in the integral and organic style, the style that is inseparable from the totality of thought and experience. It must also be noted that as Thoreau was gradually crystallizing his own ideas about style, the artistic awareness and the later achievements also crystallized. He seems to have believed in the style as a rare accomplishment, as rare as thought and imagination. And to this end he directed himself like an expert stylist. However, it must be recognized that there are always some gaps left between theory and practice, between the ideals professed and the ideals realized. It is proposed to consider the prose style in Walden in the light of the discussion in this chapter. It remains to be seen how does style contribute to the total meaning and success of Walden.

CHAPTER II

WORDS AND SENTENCES

1. Words

"All words are spiritual," observes Whitman, "nothing is more spiritual than words. Whence are they?"¹ This typical transcendental position admits far more radical possibilities in language than it would seem to at first sight. Whitman perhaps implies that as the springs of communication lie in the inner self, all words, unless betrayed by shallowness and insincerity of vision, possess the genuineness and spiritual strength of which they are the manifestations and correspondences. Words are born out of spiritual experience. Emerson in his treatise on language maintains that words at a simple level of one's relationship with nature are "signs of natural facts," and as one further explores that level, words become "emblematic" and "spiritual facts."² Thoreau's position, though basically Emersonian in theory, is far more specific and well-defined than Whitman's. His postulates and demands in the matter of words, as in other literary issues, are certainly those of a skilled craftsman who appreciates his tools and materials. Moreover, Thoreau and Whitman followed different literary paths.³ For Thoreau, words as perceptual modes of correspondence between the inner and the outer depend for their sincerity, vitality and plainness on the nature of one's experience. "A writer who does not speak out of full experience," maintains Thoreau, "uses torpid words, wooden or lifeless words, such words as 'humanitary',

which have paralysis in their tail."⁴ His appreciation of Walter Raleigh's words issuing from heroic deeds and as such possessing their sincerity and vitality,⁵ is an indication of his taste for genuine and vigorous words. Thoreau's "oracular and fateful" words would naturally emerge only from an intense and subtle poetic imagination saturated with truth.⁶ Such words alone would communicate the vital truth. "Shall I not have words as fresh as my thoughts?" queries Thoreau. "Shall I use any other man's words? A genuine thought or feeling can find expression for itself, if it have to invent hieroglyphics. It has the universe for type-metal. It is for want of original thought one man's style is like another's."⁷ Thoreau decries the "peculiar taste for bad words": "... words like 'tribal' and 'ornamentation,' which drag a dread tail after them. They will pick out of a thousand still-born words, the falsettos, the wing-clipped and lame words, as if the false notes caught their ears. They cry encore to all the cords."⁸

As an artist, Thoreau exercises keen judgement and due care in the choice of words. Characterized by economy and simplicity, his diction is not only concise and appropriate but is also ingeniously comprehensive, engulfing and fusing the concrete and the ideational. The terms economy and simplicity are only metaphorically used by Thoreau to suggest compression and plainness, and thus should not be confused with poverty and barrenness. For it is not uncommon that we may be surprised by Thoreau's extravagance. Words for Thoreau are clear-cut and well-proportioned mosaics and crystals of thought which befit the larger

design so naturally that the resultant effect is photographic, immediate and compelling. To gain the desired force and unity of impression, Thoreau employs several devices of selection and arrangement. Let us consider the following passage:

The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things. (Walden, 8-9)⁹

The thoroughness and intensity of impression are conveyed by a skilful choice and arrangement of such associative words as "mass," "desperation," "resignation," "despair," "desperate," "console," "games," "amusements," "play" and "wisdom." The alliterative latinized words "despair," "desperate" and "desperation" bring out Thoreau's strong feeling against the self-inflicted malady of despair, without letting the reader drift into a mood of dejection. The repetition of the words "desperate" and "desperation" is purposeful to gain control and emphasis of argument. One may note the startling paradox in "quiet desperation" which catches the reader's attention at once. Admittedly, the desperation of "the mass of men" could not be quiet, but it is so for Thoreau since he feels quite strongly that their lives are full of cowardly passivity — which fact is emphasized by a combination of paradox and understatement in the phrase "quiet desperation." The use of alliteration — "mass of men lead lives," lends a special musical quality to the sentence. The words

"console" and "concealed" are ironical. It may be pointed out that the sentences are predominantly short and aphoristic. Thoreau seems to be convinced that despair and resignation are the inevitable outcomes of an industrial economy which has geared people to an endless work-cycle, leaving no play in their lives. Without sharing the desperate fate of mankind, Thoreau shows them the path of wisdom, hope and emancipation.

The satirical and witty quality of Thoreau's words may be noted in the following passage:

There are nowadays professors of philosophy, but not philosophers. Yet it is admirable to profess because it was once admirable to live. To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. It is to solve some of the problems of life, not only theoretically, but practically. The success of great scholars and thinkers is commonly a courtier-like success, not kingly, not manly. They make shift to live merely by conformity, practically as their fathers did, and are in no sense the progenitors of a nobler race of men. (W, 16)

The satirical and ironical connotation of the word "profess" conveys a derisive and disparaging impression about the professor's position. It is combined with another ironical word "admirable," and the resulting phrase "admirable to profess" reveals a far greater degree of Thoreau's sarcasm of the professor who merely professes wisdom but does not love it. The contrasted use of the words "love" and "live" also sharpens the distinction between the professor and the philosopher. Some of the prominent words used to describe the professor: "profess," "theoretically," "courtier-like," "shift" and "conformity," are vivid and expressive enough for conveying the unity and intensity of the critical tone.

Distinguishing the philosopher's position are such positive words as "live," "love," "dictates," "simplicity," "independence," "magnanimity," "trust," "kingly," "manly" and "progenitors." We notice how by a careful arrangement of words alone, not to speak of the powerful logic of the passage, Thoreau reminds us of the genuine and original meaning of "professor." There is hardly any sentimental and emotional word; each word conveys a specific idea in the chain. There is no evidence of redundancy and "surplusage" either; even the words "merely and practically," a mere addenda with some writers, seem indispensable. One must also note neat puns in the words "profess" and "admirable," playing on both the sound and meaning. The professor-profess type of alliterative usage, somewhat similar to the desperate — desperation — despair type of the earlier passage, helps in gaining emphasis and corresponding rhythm.

The following passage is a typical example of Thoreau's ability to pursue an argument:

Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written. It is not enough even to be able to speak the language of that nation by which they are written, for there is a memorable interval between the spoken and the written language, the language heard and the language read. The one is commonly transitory, a sound, a tongue, a dialect merely, almost brutish, and we learn it unconsciously, like the brutes, of our mothers. The other is the maturity and experience of that; if that is our mother tongue, this is our father tongue, a reserved and select expression, too significant to be heard by the ear, which we must be born again in order to speak. The crowds of men who merely spoke the Greek and Latin tongues in the Middle Ages were not entitled by the accident of birth to read the works of genius written in those languages; for these were not written in that Greek or Latin which they knew, but in the select language of literature. They had not learned the nobler dialects of Greece and Rome, but the very materials

on which they were written were waste paper to them, and they prized instead a cheap contemporary literature. (W, 112-113)

Here again the words are the most powerful instruments of thought; besides, they also evoke particular and incisive responses. If we take this particular passage, rather the whole chapter on "Reading," as a candid statement of Thoreau's own extremely rigorous and demanding standards of writing, we find that he believes that words being the basic constituents of total expression must be intellectually challenging and communicating only to the "reserved and select." It may be mentioned that since the sound of a word echoes its sense, the combined effect of these, i. e., the interaction between the sound and the sense brings us closer to the intended meaning of the "deliberately and reservedly" produced words. If we read the words "must," "deliberately" and "reservedly" in as involving a manner as enjoined by the phrase "as deliberately and reservedly," the cumulative effect of their sounds, length and meaning makes the first sentence read like a forceful exhortation, an unerring principle. The rest of the passage is devoted to its fervent elucidation and establishment. The tonal stress on the expression "memorable interval" makes the following characterization of the spoken language and the written language more prominent and vivid. The self-descriptive words used for the mother tongue: "transitory," "sound," "tongue," "dialect" and "brutish," identify it at the most primary level as compared to the highest level of the written language which is described by such elevated expressions as "maturity," "experience," "reserved" and "select." Even in the historical context the spoken language is associated with the

"crowds," whereas the written language is "the work of genius." The words "brutish," "brutes," and "crowds" may no doubt sound little harsh and exaggerated but they are sincerely and honestly employed to emphasize the "memorable interval" between the "mother tongue" and the "father tongue." One must appreciate Thoreau's skilled artistry in the use of words for achieving such an ascending order of gusto as created in the expression: "The one is commonly transitory, a sound, a tongue, a dialect merely, almost brutish. . ." The words "reserved" and "reservedly" may present some difficulties of interpretation. The books are no doubt written "reservedly," but how one must read "reservedly as they are written" is not clear. Unless Thoreau implies that one reads only for a special purpose which he defines quite clearly in the chapter on "Reading," the expression may admit several connotations.

In the following passage, Thoreau echoes man's transcendental affinity with nature:

The indescribable innocence and beneficence of Nature, — of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter, — such health, such cheer, they afford forever! and sympathy have they ever with our race, that all Nature would be affected, and the sun's brightness fade, and the winds would sigh humanely, and the clouds rain tears, and the woods shed their leaves and put on mourning in midsummer, if any man should ever for a just cause grieve. Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself? (W, 153)

Most of the words in this passage are metaphors and symbols, but they are vivid. Such invigorating, optimistic and spiritual metaphors as "innocence," "beneficence," "health," "cheer" and "sympathy" express powerful romantic urge to seek "intelligence with the earth." The words

"indescribable," "forever," and "ever" (repeated twice) communicate, though perhaps exaggeratively, Thoreau's intensity of perception of nature, as well as of that personal urge which leads him to identify his self as "partly leaves and vegetable mould." Associated with man's grief arising out of "a just cause" are corresponding emotive responses in nature: "fade," "sigh," "tears" and "mourning" -- this again may appear as an exaggeration. But they are certainly brilliant paradoxes. After all, paradox is a mode of seeking that fulfilment which has hitherto remained and probably will remain unrealized. What Thoreau perhaps wants to emphasize is that nature as compared to society is far more worthy and sublime an abode to seek and cherish. Here the entire tone is extremely ironical. Such sympathy, innocence and beneficence as offered by nature are virtually non-existent in society. Hence, there is all the more justification for Thoreau's sincere preference for solitude, for a refuge in nature as means of spiritual development.

We come across another variety of words in the following passage:

For sounds in winter nights, and often in winter days, I heard the forlorn but melodious note of a hooting owl indefinitely far; such a sound as the frozen earth would yield if struck with a suitable plectrum, the very lingua vernacula of Walden Wood, and quite familiar to me at last, though I never saw the bird while it was making it. I seldom opened my door in a winter evening without hearing it; Hoo hoo hoo, hoorer hoo, sounded sonorously, and the first three syllables accented somewhat like how der do; or sometimes hoo hoo only. One night in the beginning of winter, before the pond froze over, about nine o'clock, I was startled by the loud honking of a goose, and, stepping to the door, heard the sound of their wings like a tempest in the woods as they flew low over my house. They passed over the pond toward Fair Haven, seemingly deterred from settling by my light, their commodore honking

all the while with a regular beat. Suddenly an unmistakable cat-owl from very near me, with the most harsh and tremendous voice I ever heard from any inhabitant of the woods, responded at regular intervals to the goose, as if determined to expose and disgrace this intruder from Hudson's Bay by exhibiting a greater compass and volume of voice in a native, and boo-hoo him out of Concord horizon. What do you mean by alarming the citadel at this time of night consecrated to me? Do you think I am ever caught napping at such an hour, and that I have not got lungs and a larynx as well as yourself? Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo! It was one of the most thrilling discords I ever heard. And yet, if you had a discriminating ear, there were in it the elements of a concord such as these plains never saw nor heard. (W, 300-301)

Thoreau seems to have trained his auditory sense to hear and interpret every sound in nature. All these sounds have such an emotive and spiritual appeal for Thoreau that he can conveniently communicate in the "lingua vernacula of Walden Wood." The hooting of the owl is "forlorn," "melodious" and sonorous. The honking of the commodore of geese has a regular beat. The cat-owl's "boo-hoo" is harsh and tremendous. These emotive responses are essentially romantic in tone and nature and are characteristic only of such a "discriminating ear" as that of Thoreau who could discern concord in discord and harmony in disharmony. He listens to the alliterative and rhyming "Hoo hoo hoo, hoorer hoo" and interprets it as "how der do." The precision and exactness with which the words are used demonstrate Thoreau's special skill in arresting the dramatic immediacy and particularity of detail and emotion. Thoreau pictures as vividly as he perceives. Hence, such words as "hooting," "honking" and "Hoo hoo hoo, hoorer hoo," are not selected merely to achieve an onomatopoeic effect but they are verbal correspondences of the poet's experience. The words "citadel" and "consecrated" are metaphorically

used to indicate Thoreau's devotion and reverence for nature.

That in his perception of nature Thoreau evinces a keen interest in the concrete and specific is perhaps clear from the foregoing discussion. As we may also note in the following passage, the description is vivid and full of concrete and specific details:

For a week I heard the circling, groping clangor of some solitary goose in the foggy mornings, seeking its companion, and still peopling the woods with the sound of a larger life than they could sustain. In April the pigeons were seen again flying express in small flocks, and in due time I heard the martins twittering over my clearing, though it had not seemed that the township contained so many that it could afford me any, and I fancied that they were peculiarly of the ancient race that dwelt in hollow trees ere white men came. In almost all climes the tortoise and the frog are among the precursors and heralds of this season, and birds fly with song and glancing plumage, and plants spring and bloom, and winds blow, to correct this slight oscillation of the poles and preserve the equilibrium of nature. (W, 345-346)

Thus, we learn about the movements, voices and other characteristics of the solitary goose, the pigeons, the martins, the tortoise and the frog. But Thoreau is not interested in the factual data just for its own sake or for writing a scientific narrative. He utilizes these natural facts as poetic materials. Such words as "solitary," "foggy," "glancing," "spring," "bloom" and "blow" are not only vividly expressive of a specific condition or a phenomenon, but they also contribute to the romantic note of the passage. In the phrase "circling, groping clangor," the words "circling" and "groping" refer to the rhythmic and mysterious movement and "clangor" to the recurring sound. The fusion of movement and sound in one phrase is an attempt to convey imagistic immediacy and concreteness of the situation. The words "precursors" and "heralds," importing the

importing the mythic and historical sense of natural change, no doubt seem extravagant for the tortoise and frog, but they are suitable and effective in the context. The scientific words "oscillation" and "equilibrium," symbolically alluding to the significance of regulated and harmonious movement and growth in nature, cannot be interpreted too literally.

Thus, Walden has a rich variety of fresh, forceful and genuine words — concrete and precise words which describe natural facts and phenomena; philosophical and conceptual words which express Thoreau's pursuit of truth and wisdom; and finally, metaphorical and symbolic words which express his poetic imagination. At all these levels, Thoreau exhibits a tendency to being "extra-vagant."¹⁰ At one level extravagance may appear to be one of Thoreau's deliberate devices of putting life into a well-worn word, yet at another, and more essentially so, it is a part of his artistic temperament and a manner of his perception. "Extra-vagance!" observes Thoreau, "it depends on how you are yarded. . . . I desire to speak somewhere without bounds; like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments; for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression."¹¹ Not that Thoreau implies any vague esoteric aesthetics or some sort of euphemism and periphrasis, or even a transgression of the natural limits of his experience, but with Carlyle he believes that extravagance, vital as it is to expression, must be "adequate" to the truth one has perceived. And since the nature of truth remains limitless, hence, "the words which

express our faith and piety are not definite; yet they are significant and fragrant to superior natures."¹² The moral, truthful and spiritual nature of such extravagant words must be appreciated in relation to the totality of subjective experience in Walden. The startling emphasis gained by the use of extravagant words, therefore, does not smack of any superficiality, but on the contrary, it is sincere, honest and integral.

One must also note the mythic and romantic nature of words in Walden. These words are creative and symbolic of a new perspective. As living percepts of contemporaneity, they are potent and vigorous enough for generating the mythic and the universal. These words are, in general, self-encompassing and comprehensive, but once they are rightly interpreted, the meaning flows out of them.

The diction in Walden is mostly formal and literary, though the vernacular and colloquial elements are not entirely missing. Contrasted to the simple and homely words, expressing the experience of daily living, we have such demanding vocabulary as "exogenous," "deliquium," "abstemiousness," "integument," "potamogetons," "ebriosity," "fluviatile," "umbrageous," "aliment," "parlaver," "éclat," and "suent." The technical vocabulary, pertaining to various branches of knowledge, as for example, ornithology, geology, surveying, geography and biology, which perhaps entrapped many critics to describe Thoreau as a naturalist or a conservationist, speaks of Thoreau's solid scholarship, his industrious and studious habits of perception, but, above all, "his genius for the specific, his concentration of character and vision."¹³ Most of the

technical vocabulary is expressed in Latin: "reticulatus," "guttatus," "Herundo bicolor," "Totonus macularius," "Unio fluviatilis," "purprestures," "Turdus migratorius," "Lepus Americanus," etc. But it is interesting to note that the vocabulary used for philosophical discussions is surprisingly non-technical. For example, in "Economy" there are hardly any special and technical words, peculiar to the subject of economics; or even in "Higher Laws" there are no unusual technical terms of ethics, metaphysics and theology. Thoreau even does not make much use of the transcendental vocabulary as Emerson and Whitman do so extensively.

In the choice and arrangement of words, Thoreau demonstrates a keen sense for rhythm. Such devices as repetition, alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance, rhyming, cacophony and euphony are most carefully employed to achieve that measured modulation of sound and rhythm which is characteristic of poetry. Although Thoreau appreciates the use of Saxon words (cf. Carlyle's style) as purporting more strength and vigour of tone,¹⁴ his own stock of Walden seems to comprise words more of Latin and French rather than Saxon extraction.

2. Sentences

"A perfectly healthy sentence. . .," says Thoreau, "is extremely rare. For the most part we miss the hue and fragrance of the thought, as if we could be satisfied with the hues of the morning or evening without their colors, or the heavens without their azure."¹⁵ The sentences of writers like Walter Raleigh "are verduous and blooming as evergreen and flowers, because they are rooted in fact and experience, but our false and florid sentences have only tints of flowers without their sap or roots."¹⁶ They are as compressed, solid and vigorous as the living experience which they communicate. One great quality of such sentences is that "the little that is said is eked out by implication of the much that was done,"¹⁷ — the quality that is conspicuous by its total absence in such writings as are attempted under some transient inspiration, or an urgency of pulpit-eloquence, or even in the vein of superficial imitation. The firmness and genuineness of Thoreau's sentences lie in their selective but highly concentrated revelations of fact and thought. His sentences are such well-cut and fair proportions, varying in size, vitality and movement, as the growth in nature.

Thoreau's sentences, observes Channing, "will bear study; meanings not detected at the first glance, subtle hints which the writer himself may not have foreseen, appear."¹⁸ This subtlety in a sentence is not a matter of coincidence. It is partly due to the complexity of poet's vision and partly due to the deliberate manner of composition. A thought just cannot be emptied unreservedly; its sheer complexity stipulates a

certain unique manner of its utterance, that of a "stutterer" to use Thoreau's own expression, which lends it natural correspondence and prominence. "The most attractive sentences," remarks Thoreau, "are perhaps, not the wisest, but the surest and roundest."¹⁹ While complaining about De Quincey's sentences that they are not "concentrated and nutty," Thoreau makes his own position abundantly clear:

Sentences which suggest far more than they say, which have an atmosphere about them, which do not merely report an old, but make a new, impression; sentences which suggest as many things and are as durable as a Roman aqueduct; to frame these, that is the art of writing. Sentences which are expensive, towards which so many volumes, so much life, went; which lie like boulders on the page, up and down or across; which contain the seed of other sentences, not mere repetition, but creation; which a man might sell his grounds and castles to build. If De Quincey had suggested each of his pages in a sentence and passed on, it would have been far more excellent writing.²⁰

Thoreau is clearly emphasizing the importance of those well-structured "durable" moulds which create new and also have the power of multiple suggestion. Only such sentences will make a person's style "kinked and knotted." Thoreau's love for a somewhat difficult style is evident from his reference to Hussein Effendi's appreciation of Ibrahim Pasha's epistolary style: "because of 'the difficulty of understanding it; there was but one person at Jidda who was capable of understanding and explaining the Pasha's correspondence'."²¹ And Thoreau tells us that "a man's life is taxed for the least thing well done."²² For Thoreau, this type of difficulty is the sign of a rare health and vigour in a sentence: "Give me a sentence which no intelligence can understand,

There must be a kind of life and palpitation to it, and under its words a kind of blood must circulate forever."²³ Indeed, such an expression as Thoreau cherishes, like that of a Hussein Effendi, is born out of the total poetic experience of "being" or "becoming," with the material and the spiritual subtly blended, such that it possesses never-dying and universal vitality and appeal. Hence, the beauty of a sentence, as Thoreau wants us to believe, lies in its power of suggestiveness, latency of thought and wisdom, and capacity to invigorate. Such a sentence emits flashes of genius and subtle truths and becomes the true channel of apprehending the subjective experience that gives birth to it.

Walden has a rich variety of sentences, from simple to complex and from short to really long ones. In the following passage:

I do not mean to prescribe rules to strong and valiant natures, who will mind their own affairs whether in heaven or hell, and perchance build more magnificently and spend more lavishly than the richest, without ever impoverishing themselves, not knowing how they live,—if, indeed, there are any such, as has been dreamed; nor to those who find their encouragement and inspiration in precisely the present condition of things, and cherish it with the fondness and enthusiasm of lovers,—and, to some extent, I reckon myself in this number; I do not speak to those who are well employed, in whatever circumstances, and they know whether they are well employed or not;— but mainly to the mass of men who are discontented, and idly complaining of the hardness of their lot or of the times, when they might improve them. There are some who complain most energetically and inconsolably of any, because they are, as they say, doing their duty. I also have in mind that seemingly wealthy, but most terribly impoverished class of all, who have accumulated dross, but know not how to use it, or get rid of it, and thus have forged their own golden or silver fetters. (W, 17-18)

We have one long and two short sentences. The first three parts of the long sentence, each separated by a semicolon, deal with the categories to which Thoreau does "not mean to prescribe rules," and the fourth part, preceded by a dash, refers to the "mass of men" for whom these rules are intended. One has to read through till the last part to grasp the full meaning. The second part is well-linked with the conjunctive "nor," the third part starts again with "I do not speak," and the fourth part is joined by "but." The unconventional location of the last clause, "when they might improve them," is perhaps to avoid interruption. Grammatically, the sentence is flawless. The periodic construction of the sentence seems to be appropriate to the process of thought. Starting with the negative assertion "I do not mean" and following a process of elimination, Thoreau surveys the broad base of society vigorously with a mixed tinge of irony and sarcasm. The skeptical and ironical tone of the clause "if, indeed, there are any such, as has been dreamed" rings through the entire passage. There is a softening down of the ironical tone in the second part with which Thoreau identifies himself somewhat modestly. And the last part marks the definitive climactic culmination. The sentence on the whole has a remarkable unity.

The second sentence is extremely terse and incisive. It would perhaps require some effort to detect the subtle irony and paradox. What others consider "duty" as they suffer, is, in fact, their forceful complaint. The word "any" is of course a broad reference to "the hardness of their lot or of their times." What Thoreau is trying to

emphasize is that one's duty lies, not in a passive submission to and resigned acceptance of this "hardiness" and other stringencies of existence, but in a powerful urge to improve that lot. The third sentence is again a brilliant example of Thoreau's use of irony and paradox, which are revealed by a skilful arrangement of words: "seemingly wealthy" — "terribly impoverished," "dross," and "golden or silver fetters."

One common characteristic of these three sentences is the use of antithesis which creates tension between the two contrary ideas or situations, and thus adds to the vividness. Each sentence has a perfect variation of rhythm and tone. Indeed, every sentence is a marked expression of sincere, forceful and subtle argument for true happiness.

One would notice Thoreau's felicity and ease with the long sentences. Thoreau's long sentences are as carefully constructed as his short ones. Of course, there is always a danger of the long sentence suffering from imbalance, obscurity and disunity,²⁴ particularly at the hands of careless and immature writers. However, it seems quite common with the well-known writers that the nature of their powerful thought perhaps requires larger units of expression. But whether or not all writers are able to achieve the unity of tone and impression, is doubtful.²⁵ Let us consider the following long sentence from Walden:

Sometimes I rambled to pine groves, standing like temples, or like fleets at sea, full-rigged, with wavy boughs, and rippling with light, so soft and green and shady that the Druids would have forsaken their oaks to worship in them; or to the cedar wood beyond Flint's Pond, where the trees, covered with hoary blue berries, spiring higher and higher, are fit to stand before Valhalla, and the creeping juniper

covers the ground with wreaths full of fruit; or to swamps where the usnea lichen hangs in festoons from the white-spruce trees, and toadstools, round tables of the swamp gods, cover the ground, and more beautiful fungi adorn the stumps, like butterflies or shells, vegetable winkles; where the swamp-pink and dogwood grow, the red alder berry glows like eyes of imps, the waxwork grooves and crushes the hardest woods in its folds, and the wild holly berries make the beholder forget his home with their beauty, and he is dazzled and tempted by nameless other wild forbidden fruits, too fair for mortal taste. (W, 223)

It is one of the most poetic and mythic descriptions in Walden, dwelling on the cumulative experience of rambling to the pine groves, the cedar woods and the swamps. Each clause, each phrase is a metaphor. The exquisite and vivid imagery, bold similes and the contrasting snapshot account of each excursion do not obstruct the flow of meaning but present such a fascinating panorama that one rarely stops to consider the length of the sentence. Moreover, every clause is an extremely compressed and well-knit unit of luxuriance, full of powerful suggestiveness of meaning and appeal through living concreteness of nature, as if Thoreau has taken facts out of the region of commonsense and given them the mythic or universal character.²⁶ Not only that, the movement and the varied pitch and tone of the clauses add to the musical quality and natural harmony of the sentence. One must read the entire sentence and reach the final aphoristic clause to encounter the most sarcastic and ironic note which further gains in strength and proportion by an allusion to the myth of fall. However, the adverb "where" of the fourth clause may present some difficulty of interpretation. Since it does not have the same parallel beginning ("or to ... where") of the

preceding clauses, one might wonder if the clause is a continued description of the swamps, or is an account of some other excursion, or even is a combined reference to the three ramblings. It seems that the first possibility is more likely. But despite this difficulty, the sentence is one unified whole. It may however be noted that Thoreau's long sentence is generally a period and has climactic ending.

Indeed, one can easily see certain problems of sustenance, structure and punctuation. Walden is almost full of long sentences, some of quite unusual length²⁷ — but they are all excellent sentences. It appears that in this case the length is by no means a criterion in determining the quality of a sentence. In the handling of a long sentence, what is perhaps important with a writer like Thoreau is the degree of success he achieves in making it a perfect vehicle of his thought and in overcoming such dangerous pitfalls as are aptly pointed out by Herbert Read.²⁸

The following passage contains relatively shorter sentences of a different variety:

I sometimes wonder that we can be so frivolous, I may almost say, as to attend to the gross but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery, there are so many keen and subtle masters that enslave both North and South. It is hard to have a Southern overseer; it is worse to have a Northern one; but worst of all when you are the slave-driver of yourself. Talk of a divinity in man! Look at the teamster on the highway, wending to market by day or night; does any divinity stir within him? His highest duty to fodder and water his horses! What is his destiny to him compared with the shipping interests: Does not he drive for Squire Make-a-stir? How godlike, how immortal, is he? See how he cowers and sneaks, how vaguely all the day he fears, not being immortal nor divine, but the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, a fame won by his

own deeds. Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion. What a man thinks of himself, that it is which determines, or rather indicates, his fate. Self-emancipation even in the West Indian provinces of the fancy and imagination, — what Wilberforce is there to bring that about? Think, also, of the ladies of the land weaving toilet cushions against the last day, not to betray too green an interest in their fates! As if you could kill time without injuring eternity. (W, 8)

The first two sentences are perfect examples of the use of antithesis and irony. One may be outwitted by a passing yet startling reference to "the gross but somewhat foreign form of servitude called Negro Slavery" unless one pursues the implied hint contained in the latter part or in the following sentences that Thoreau is concerned with the inner-slavery and not with the outer-slavery. The third exclamatory sentence with its pungent irony and seer's rage is stunning. Its strong power of suggestiveness generates a sort of tension that compels the reader to identify the thematic meaning. One may also note the subtle paradox in the suggestion. The next few pithy and terse sentences reveal ironically and sceptically the nature of "divinity" in the teamster till we face a trenchant question: "How godlike, how immortal, is he?" The ironical and sarcastic vein of the interrogative expression continues into the following definitive pictures of the sordid condition of man. The last few sentences are brilliant aphorisms, as for example, "Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion." They have the firmness, definiteness and vigour, characteristic of an author who, "had he held a plow instead of a pen, could have drawn a furrow deep and straight to

the end."²⁹ The last epigrammatic sentence: "As if you could kill time without injuring eternity," sounds like a dictum, an emphatic and paradoxical expression full of irony and sarcasm.

The style of the above sentences is essentially aphoristic, characteristic of Thoreau's vision and "perception of identity." It is a style which reveals basic incongruities in our lives and emphasizes wisdom and spirituality. However, it is not discontinuously aphoristic like Emerson's or Whitman's since Thoreau achieves continuity by careful construction of sentences and clarity and intensity of his thought.

Let us consider another passage:

All sensuality is one, though it takes many forms; all purity is one. It is the same whether a man eat, or drink, or cohabit, or sleep sensually. They are but one appetite, and we only need to see a person do any one of these things to know how great a sensualist he is. The impure can neither stand nor sit with purity. When the reptile is attacked at one mouth of his burrow, he shows himself at another. If you would be chaste, you must be temperate. What is chastity? How shall a man know if he is chaste? He shall not know it. We have heard of this virtue, but we know not what it is. We speak conformably to the rumor which we have heard. From exertion come wisdom and purity; from sloth ignorance and sensuality. In the student sensuality is a sluggish habit of mind. An unclean person is universally a slothful one, one who sits by a stove, whom the sun shines on prostrate, who reposes without being fatigued. If you would avoid uncleanness, and all the sins, work earnestly, though it be at cleaning a stable. Nature is hard to be overcome, but she must be overcome. What avails it that you are Christian, if you are not purer than the heathen, if you deny yourself no more, if you are not more religious? I know of many systems of religion esteemed heathenish whose percepts fill the reader with shame, and provoke him to new endeavors, though it be to the performance of rites merely. (W, 243-44)

Most of these sentences are direct and aphoristic. There is a rich

variety of syntax and movement. To focus the issues directly, well-defined and sharp questions and highly exhortative propositions are posed. The answers are of course extremely rhetorical. The witty dramaticism created by an inner rhetorical dialogue and a repetitive pattern of the question-answer movement is characterized by sincerity and honesty of the argument. Thoreau defines his own views quite succinctly, clearly, and boldly. To achieve control and emphasis of argument, Thoreau follows familiar devices of antithesis and ironical contrast between "sensuality" and "purity," between "sloth" and "exertion" and between Christianity and heathenism. However, the last sentence strikes all the chords most powerfully. It is paradoxical, ironical and sarcastic.

The following passage is yet another example of some of the most enchanting and vivid sentences in Walden:

White Pond and Walden are great crystals on the surface of the earth, Lakes of Light. If they were permanently congealed, and small enough to be clutched, they would, perchance, be carried off by slaves, like precious stones, to adorn the heads of emperors; but being liquid, and ample, and secured to us and our successors forever, we disregard them, and run after the diamond of Kohinoor. They are too pure to have a market value; they contain no muck. How much more beautiful than our lives, how much more transparent than our characters, are they! We never learned meanness of them. How much fairer than the pool before the farmer's door, in which his ducks swim! Hither the clean wild ducks come. Nature has no human inhabitant who appreciates her. The birds with their plumage and their notes are in harmony with the flowers, but what youth or maiden conspires with the wild luxuriant beauty of Nature? She flourishes most alone, far from the towns where they reside. Talk of heaven! ye disgrace earth. (W, 221-22)

Quite a few sentences in this passage can undoubtedly be described as

metaphors. The poetic sensibility soars quite high beyond the bounds of logical witticism, but only to emphasize the theme. The first, the last but one and the few sentences preceding to it are brilliant examples of Thoreau's romantic extravagance. The second sentence is probably one of the best examples of a "nutty" and "kinked" sentence in Walden. Its quirky and curly movement, or rather some sudden twists in its linear flow, creates some sort of tension and adds to the level of its difficulty. It is almost impossible to read such a sentence rapidly and superficially. However, the sentence is neither flat nor jerky in the sense that despite its curvy unevenness, the rise and fall is like that of the natural growth, — a similarity that Thoreau always seems to be endeavouring to achieve in his sentences — it possesses basic unity and coherence. Several devices such as irony, allusion, paradox are fused to yield series of powerful suggestions about the nature of man, his preference for the Kohinoor diamond to the "great crystals." The sentence: "How much more beautiful than our lives, how much more transparent than our characters, are they?" is an ironical lamentation reinforcing the theme. The last sentence, somewhat similar in structure and tone to: "Talk of a divinity in man!" (referred to earlier on P. 43), is the most powerful and striking of all others in the passage. It is a sharp and sarcastic rebuke to man for his failure to appreciate the heavenly beauty in nature. The sentence is a vivid and climactic summation of the paradoxical position of man. All the sentences in the passage are tight and well-compressed units. The unity is achieved by controlled movement and cohesiveness of sentences.

As it is evident from the foregoing discussion, a good majority of sentences in Walden are extremely rhetorical. They are witty and aphoristic. There are substantial sections of prose-poetry in most of the chapters (for example, "Sounds," "The Ponds," "Baker Farm," "Winter Animals," "The Pond in Winter," and "Spring"), but even there the sentences are extremely rhetorical. Such deliberate devices of composition as antithesis, balance, period, inversion, and indirection are somewhat commonly but effectively and fascinatingly used to gain vividness of impression and control of argument. Irony, paradox, understatement and overstatement are some of the other essential devices of Thoreau's rhetorical style; they are perhaps appropriate to Thoreau's perception of multiple-continuous relationships between the finite and the infinite, between the ideal and the real, between man and nature, and between man and the ultimate reality. Hence, one can understand the sarcastic, chastening and exhortative nature and tone of the sentences. Rooted in fact and experience, they are honest, sincere and forceful expressions of glowing wisdom and spirituality. There is hardly a place where one can complain of chaffiness, trivia or verbiage. The brilliant knotting and compression of meaning admirably lend a universal and comprehensive character to the sentences. Thoreau seems to be rightly convinced that the only way to state a fact "truly and absolutely" is not to state it fully but to solidify and harden it like a stone, so that such a statement possesses subtle and amazing power of multiple suggestion. Thoreau's poetic sentences are romantic and extravagant. In order to understand the total meaning one must decipher his bold and subtle figures of speech.

CHAPTER III

IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

In considering a style like that of Walden, the study of imagery and symbolism is of great significance; partly because they are perhaps the most appropriate media of communicating the cosmological and mythic consciousness; and partly because they help us in identifying such subtle tendencies as finally lead to the understanding of the imaginative process and the work of art itself. It has been maintained by writers like Sherman Paul (see Chapter I for discussion on the mythic and symbolic nature of Walden) that the study of Walden essentially entails the deciphering of the symbolic process of Thoreau's imagination. Indeed, the use of figurative language, more particularly the symbols and metaphors, is vital to the expression of such a subjective experience as that of Walden.

"The moment our discourse [with nature] rises above the ground of familiar facts, and is inflamed with passion or exalted by thought" — observes Emerson, "it clothes itself in images. A man conversing in earnest, if he watch his intellectual processes, will find that a material image, more or less luminous, arises in his mind, contemporaneous with every thought, which furnishes the vestment of the thought. Hence, good writing and brilliant discourse," adds Emerson, "are perpetual allegories. This imagery is spontaneous. It is the blending of experience with the present action of the mind. It is proper creation.

It is the working of the Original Cause through the instruments he has already made."¹ This is the middle or second level of one's experience with nature,² but at the highest level, "the word is emblematic. Parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind."³ Emerson's elucidation of the process as well as the scope, which nature as a repository of unique verbal correspondences affords to an artist, furnishes an important key to the study of imagery and symbolism as important elements of style in Walden. Thoreau seems to have realized the necessity of a highly intense contact with "particular facts" in nature as means of his own inner exploration in relation to the processes and phenomena of universal creation, growth and dissolution, of mysterious kinship within and between the macrocosm and microcosm and of manifest totality and unity in the universe. However, Thoreau, in his repeated emphasis on sense-perception as the basis of imagination, makes an important departure from the rest of the transcendentalists. Therefore, his images and symbols, for the most part, are drawn from concrete natural facts and phenomena, observed during original and provocative personal experiences. However, as the process of contemplation intensifies, they tend to be highly allusive and illusive, and become subtle and climactic interpretations and revelations of the mysteries in universe. The imagery and symbolism in Walden is so rich, sumptuous and variegated that at one time Thoreau seems to be closer to the seventeenth century metaphysical tradition and yet at another he evinces acute romantic sensibility and intensity.

Let us examine the following passage from the chapter on

"Economy:"

What I have heard of Bramins sitting exposed to four fires and looking in the face of the sun; or hanging suspended, with their heads downward, over flames; or looking at the heavens over their shoulders "until it becomes impossible for them to resume their natural position, while from the twist of the neck nothing but liquids can pass into the stomach;" or dwelling, chained for life, at the foot of a tree; or measuring with their bodies, like caterpillars, the breadth of vast empires; or standing on one leg on the tops of pillars, — even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness. (W, 4-5)

The picturesque description of the yogic practices of the Brahmins, the entire kinesthesia — their varying sitting and standing postures and the reference to the four fires and other ritualistic detail, offers an elegant, witty and sarcastic contrast to the rigorous and unconscious penance of the Concordians. This type of allusive imagery, based on the classical myths of the Oriental, Greek and Roman literatures, is quite commonly used in Walden. Following this allusion to the conscious penance of the Brahmins is another mythic reference to "the twelve labors of Hercules." The same tone continues in the following passage as well:

Why should they eat their sixty acres, when man is condemned to eat only his peck of dirt? Why should they begin digging their graves as soon as they are born? They have got to live a man's life, pushing all these things before them, and get on as well as they can. How many a poor immortal soul have I met well-nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood-lot! The portionless, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances, find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh. (W, 5-6)

The expressions: "peck of dirt," "digging their graves," "crushed and smothered," "creeping down the road of life," and "pushing before it a barn," are concrete images, conveying Thoreau's pungent sarcasm and disgust at the hopeless and purposeless self-afflictions of the Concordians and indeed, of humanity. And soon the reader's impression of the wasteland is reinforced by another strong image: "The better part of the man is soon ploughed into the soil for compost" (W, 6). The metaphors "ploughed" and "compost" suggest the nature of wastage caused by an abject "necessity" that men have imposed on themselves — "laying up treasures which moth and rust will corrupt and thieves break through and steal" (W, 6).

It may be noted that the metaphors and images are organic parts of the running argument which brings out the real purpose of living. Even the two continuously recurring words in this chapter, "economy" and "simplicity," are metaphorically used. The kings and queens do not have any understanding of the real purpose of wearing clothes and, as such, "are no better than wooden horses to hang the clean clothes on" (W, 23-24). New clothes of fashion are symbolic of artificiality and false economy; therefore Thoreau maintains that not new clothes but new wearers, changed wearers are required:

Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives. The loon retires to solitary ponds to spend it. Thus also the snake casts its slough, and the caterpillar its wormy coat, by an internal industry and expansion; for clothes are but our outmost cuticle and mortal coil. Otherwise we shall be found sailing under false colors, and be inevitably cashiered at last by our own opinion, as well as that of mankind. (W, 26)

We have a brilliant mixture of seasonal and animal imagery, predominantly kinesthetic and metamorphic, and pertaining to time and space. Whereas the metaphors — "slough," "wormy coat," "cuticle" and "mortal coil," impress in unison the triviality and insignificance of external garments, which are cast off only in the event of some inner change, the idea of genuine garments is emphatically suggested by a highly concentrated cluster of botanical, epidermal and anatomical images in the following passage:

We don garment after garment, as if we grew like exogenous plants by addition without. Our outside and often thin and fanciful clothes are our epidermis, or false skin, which partakes not of our life, and may be stripped off here and there without fatal injury; our thicker garments, constantly worn, are our cellular integument, or cortex; but our shirts are our liber, or true bark, which cannot be removed without girdling and so destroying the man. (W, 26)

The simile "grew like exogenous plants" sets an ironical and sarcastic tone of passionate inquiry, which lends itself into the following metaphorical comparisons and analogies. The contrasting metaphors, "thicker garments" and "shirts" represented by "cellular integument, or cortex" and "liber or true bark" as opposed to the so-called "thin and fanciful clothes" compared with "false skin," are subtle yet striking. Thus, we notice Thoreau's practice of using metaphors and symbols of concrete and living reality in emphasizing truth and genuineness. The images are unmuddled distinct units, yet each with its powerful suggestiveness leads into another. Their associative and resilient qualities make the total imagery unified and tense.

A house, as Thoreau argues, has made a virtual prisoner of man; it has removed him away from nature for good. Since a house as a social institution has become bigger and more important than the man, it is symbolic of individual and social degeneration. Let us consider some of the recurring images which reinforce this impression about the house and its superficial architecture: "Birds do not sing in caves, nor do doves cherish their innocence in dovecots" (W, 31). — A house designed without having exercised "a little Yankee shrewdness may be an almhouse, a prison, or a splendid mausoleum" (W, 31). — "for our houses are such unwieldy property that we are often imprisoned rather than housed in them; and the bad neighbourhood to be avoided is our own scurvy selves" (W, 37). — "We have built for this world a family mansion, and for the next a family tomb" (W, 41). — "But a man has no more to do with the style of architecture of his house than a tortoise with that of its shell: nor need the soldier be so idle as to try to paint the precise color of his virtue on his standard" (W, 52).

The argument against luxuriant furnishings is carried on with the help of similar witty and ironical metaphors:

Morning work! By the blushes of Aurora and the music of Memnon, what should be man's morning work in this world? I had three pieces of limestone on my desk, but I was terrified to find that they required to be dusted daily, when the furniture of my mind was all undusted still, and I threw them out the window in disgust. How, then, could I have a furnished house? I would rather sit in the open air, for no dust gathers on the grass, unless where man has broken ground. (W, 40)

The punning on the words "furniture" and "undusted," as also their use as

witty and startling metaphors bring out adequately the ironical lack of appreciation of the proper utilization of pious and musical morning, which is not to clean the wooden furniture, a symbol of superfluity and uselessness, but to undust the furniture of mind.

In his discussion of philanthropy, Thoreau remarks:

I do not value chiefly a man's uprightness and benevolence, which are, as it were, his stem and leaves. Those plants of whose greenness withered we make herb tea for the sick serve but a humble use, and are most employed by quacks. I want the flower and fruit of a man; that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me, and some ripeness flavor our intercourse. His goodness must not be a partial and transitory act, but a constant superfluity, which costs him nothing and of which he is unconscious. (W, 85)

The botanical and floral imagery is extremely sensuous and concrete. The basic metaphor of plant is so expanded that as the stem, leaves, flowers and fruit represent a certain hierarchy of growth, so they do in man in portraying the corresponding degrees of his virtues. Thoreau's preference is naturally for the flower and fruit rather than for the stem and leaves, or even for those plants whose greenness has withered. For as the "fragrance" of the flower and the "ripeness" of fruit are "unconscious" and impartial essences, so should be man's goodness and charitableness. The olfactory image "fragrance be wafted" creates a unique and compressed romantic sensation. The image "ripeness flavor" has a direct but fused appeal to the senses of taste and smell. However, both these images are also kinesthetic. The contrasting metaphors are so delicately arranged and balanced that the resulting imagery adds to the intelligibility and lucidity of the thought.

Most of the descriptive passages in Walden are unique expressions of Thoreau's intensity of sense-perception and imagination. In the following passage, for example:

For the first week, whenever I looked out on the pond it impressed me like a tarn high up on the side of a mountain, its bottom far above the surface of other lakes, and, as the sun arose, I saw it throwing off its nightly clothing of mist, and here and there, by degrees, its soft ripples or its smooth reflecting surface was revealed, while the mists, like ghosts, were stealthily withdrawing in every direction into the woods, as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle. The very dew seemed to hang upon the trees later into the day than usual, as on the sides of mountains. (W, 95-96)

the entire scene seems to have been rendered as a cinematographic impression with every minute detail of the objects and their movements. The topological images "like a tarn high up on the side of a mountain . . . " set the romantic note which is further heightened by the phenomenon of gradual disappearance of mists. The mist is the "nightly clothing," synonymous, perhaps, with the darkness of mind which is cast off by sunrise. It may be noted that, for Thoreau, the sun and morning are important symbols of light, creation and hope. The imagery of the ghostly and stealthy movement of the mists and their sudden and mysterious dispersion "as at the breaking up of some nocturnal conventicle" add to the mystery and glory of the morning scene. One may also note the dramatic transformation of the small pond into a tarn and of the mists into dew. The kinesthetic tension and instantaneity of imagery make them highly compelling in their appeal to the visual and auditory senses, and to imagination. Besides, one must note the feelings of wonder and excitement

at watching the dreamlike movements and the phenomenon of revelation.

Let us consider another passage similar to the one discussed above:

When I looked across the pond from this peak toward the Sudbury meadows, which in time of flood I distinguished elevated perhaps by a mirage in their seething valley, like a coin in a basin, all the earth beyond the pond appeared like a thin crust insulated and floated even by this small sheet of intervening water, and I was reminded that this on which I dwelt was but dry land. (W, 97)

Undoubtedly, it is an attempt to arrest and dramatize a single glance in which Thoreau perceives fully and intensely the vast expanse of nature across the pond in the time of flood. The image "a mirage in their seething valley" is extremely volatile and fluid. The Sudbury meadows look elevated "like a coin in a basin" but the earth beyond the pond is seen as "a thin crust insulated and floated. . . ." These images of elevation, floating, and insularity indicate Thoreau's perception of buoyancy in nature and the power of earth to protect itself and retain its character. But still, it is the water which creates buoyancy and makes the earth float.

We have already referred to the importance of morning, the phenomenon of dawn, which seems to have a special religious sanctity for Thoreau. As Thoreau observes:

Morning brings back the heroic ages. I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it; a standing

advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world. The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. (W, 98-99)

Thoreau's imagination is so wide awake that in the voice of a mosquito he hears a trumpet-like song of fame, "Homer's requiem: itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings." It becomes a means of perceiving "cosmic reality." And finally, Thoreau gives the most terse symbolic meaning to morning:

All poets and heroes, like Memnon, are the children of Aurora, and emit their music at sunrise. To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning. It matters not what the clocks say or the attitudes and labors of men. Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. (W, 99-100)

Thus, the symbol attains centripetal meaning. Morning implies complete and full awakening of the self from the state of physical and intellectual "somnolence and slumber." Such an awakened state of vision is the only state that inspires poetic meditation of eternal and universal nature.

In the following passage, almost every sentence is a subtle metaphor:

Time is but the stream I go a-fishing in. I drink at it; but while I drink I see the sandy bottom and detect how shallow it is. Its thin current slides away, but eternity remains. I would drink deeper; fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with stars...The intellect is a cleaver; it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary. My head is hands and feet. I feel all my best faculties concentrated in it. My instinct tells me that my head is an organ for burrowing, as some creatures use their snout and fore paws, and with it I would mine and burrow my way through these hills. I think that the richest vein is somewhere hereabouts; so by the divining-rod and thin rising vapors I judge; and here I will begin to mine. (W, 109)

We encounter some of the best paradoxical images, as for example: "fish in the sky, whose bottom is pebbly with the stars," "head is hands and feet," and "head is an organ for burrowing." Thoreau would fish not only in the time-stream but also in the sky, detect sandy and pebbly bottoms, and, thus, discover eternity and seek affinity with it. Time is conquered, rather eternalized. The images: "cleaver," "burrowing," "divining-rod" and "mine," reflect Thoreau's acute awareness of the vigorous and ingenious process of perceiving nature as means of deciphering the cosmological principles and divine mystery. The only worthwhile work is the intellectual and spiritual experience, undertaken in the immediate present without any considerations of "haste" or "hurry," or even of past and future. "God himself," says Thoreau, "culminates in the present moment, and will never be more divine in the lapse of all the ages" (W, 107).

Alluding to the lamentable reading tastes of people, Thoreau remarks:

All this they read with saucer eyes, and erect and primitive curiosity, and with unwearied gizzard, whose corrugations even yet need not sharpening, just as some little four-year-old bencher his two-cent gilt-covered edition of Cinderella, — without any improvement, that I can see, in the pronunciation, or accent, or emphasis, or any more skill in extracting or inserting the moral. The result is dulness of sight, a stagnation of the vital circulations, and a general deliquium and sloughing off of all the intellectual faculties. This sort of gingerbread is baked daily and more sedulously than pure wheat or rye-and-Indian in almost every oven, and finds a surer market. (W, 117)

The anatomical and physiological images: "saucer eyes," "unwearied

gizzard," "corrugations," and "a general deliquium and sloughing," are witty and sarcastic suggestions of stagnation and degeneration, resulting from the reading of cheap literature which some readers have been devouring "like cormorants and ostriches" (W, 116). Thoreau stresses the importance of reading classics with which "we may hope to scale heaven at last" (W, 115). But he deplores that "we are a race of tit-men" (W, 72) and "need to be provoked, — goaded like oxen, as we are, into a trot" (W, 120).

The passage below presents a vivid and picturesque account of the movements and voices of the animals:

As I sit at my window this summer afternoon, hawks are circling about my clearing; the tantivy of wild pigeons, flying by twos and threes athwart my view, or perching restless on the white pine boughs behind my house, gives a voice to the air; a fish hawk dimples the glassy surface of the pond and brings up a fish; a mink steals out of the marsh before my door and seizes a frog by the shore; the sedge is bending under the weight of the reed-birds flitting hither and thither; and for the last half-hour I have heard the rattle of railroad cars, now dying away and then reviving like the beat of a partridge, conveying travellers from Boston to the country. (W, 127)

The description is extremely lucid and poetic. The live and graphic recording of the specific responses of the birds and animals, bending of the sedge and "the rattle of the railroad," has a diffused appeal to the senses of sight and hearing. Such transparent images of brisk and instantaneous movement as "circling," "tantivy," "flying," "perching," "dimples," "steals" and "flitting," portraying specific modes of natural and instinctive behaviour as they do, picture a unique pattern of rhythmic and overflowing life in nature; as also they are indicative of

Thoreau's exalted mood of spiritual relaxation. Contrasted to this rhythmic and harmonious life in nature is the intermittently received "rattling," "like the beat of the partridge," which, as it reminds Thoreau of some distant movement of men, seems to merge into the total harmony in nature.

Thoreau is fascinated by the sounds and movements, not only of the animals, birds and other natural objects or phenomena, but those of the engine and the railroad cars also. In addition to the spiritual and original appeal that these movements and sounds hold for Thoreau, they also constitute unique artistic potential. In the following passage:

When I meet the engine with its train of cars moving off with planetary motion, — or, rather, like a comet, for the beholder knows not if with that velocity and with that direction it will ever revisit this system, since its orbit does not look like a returning curve, — with its steam cloud like a banner streaming behind in golden and silver wreaths, like many a downy cloud which I have seen, high in the heavens, unfolding its masses to the light, — as if this travelling demigod, this cloud-compeller, would ere long take the sunset sky for the livery of his train; when I hear the iron horse make the hills echo with his snort like thunder, shaking the earth with his feet, and breathing fire and smoke from his nostrils (what kind of winged horse or fiery dragon they will put into the new Mythology I don't know), it seems as if the earth had got a race now worthy to inhabit it. (W, 128-129)

we notice how Thoreau's vivid imagination can render observed facts into spontaneous and perpetually evocative prose-poetry. Such photographic images: "planetary motion . . . like a comet," and "orbit does not look like a returning curve," are expressive of subtle tension and immediacy which colour the entire passage. The steam-cloud images: "like a banner streaming . . . golden and silver wreaths . . . high in heavens . . .

unfolding its masses," picturing the "masses" of steam with its transformation into several mysterious shapes, elusive patterns of movement and flight and merger with the heavens, are extremely romantic and bewitching ones; at the same time they suggest the nature of reality they represent. But then, the engine is a "travelling demigod," a "cloud-compeller," and an "iron horse," as if it is an intruder into the celestial atmosphere. Quite ironically Thoreau queries if the engine with its "snort like thunder," shaking and breathing would take the place of a "winged horse or [a] fiery dragon" in "the new Mythology." And the ironical undertones and overtones of the passage are congruous with the total suggestion that the engine as such cannot assume any poetic or mythological significance, even that of a "fiery dragon." Of course, Thoreau is raising a far deeper question of people's attitude towards railroad and other similar symbols of scientific and industrial development and their place in our lives — a theme which he elaborates so profusely in Walden, particularly in the chapter on "Economy."

"When other birds are still," observes Thoreau, "the screech owls take up the strain, like mourning women their u-lu-lu. Their dismal scream is truly Ben Jonsonian. Wise midnight hags. It is no honest and blunt tu-whit to-who of the poets, but, without jesting, a most solemn graveyard ditty, the mutual consolations of suicide lovers remembering the pangs and the delights of supernal love in the infernal groves" (W, 138). The imagery is indeed witty and satirical. Thoreau's highly trained auditory sense can indentify and discriminate the cacophonous,

"dismal scream" as symbolic of some "graveyard ditty" or a lost cause. He is also "serenaded by a hooting owl." The impression is conveyed in a series of dramatic and forceful images:

Near at hand you could fancy it the most melancholy sound in Nature, as if she meant by this to stereotype and make permanent in her choir the dying moans of a human being, — some poor weak relic of mortality who has left hope behind, and howls like an animal, yet with human sobs, on entering the dark valley, made more awful by a certain gurgling melodiousness, — I find myself beginning with the letters gl when I try to imitate it, — expressive of a mind which has reached the gelatinous, mildewy stage in the mortification of all healthy and courageous thought. (W, 138-139)

And this reminds Thoreau of "ghouls and idiots and insane howlings." Thoreau is happy to note the existence of these owls which "are the spirits, the low spirits and melancholy forebodings, of fallen souls that once in human shape night-walked the earth and did the deeds of darkness, now expiating their sins with their wailing hymns or threnodies in the scenery of their transgressions" (W, 138). Thus, an owl is an important symbol of negation and despondency; the allied images and metaphors pose such subtle questions as those pertaining to eschatology, rebirth and transmigration. Thoreau seems to have believed in the esoteric occultism of sounds, i.e., the sweet and harmonious sounds are divine. But he also subscribes to the view that inner spirit is capable of such transmutation as to find harmony in disharmony and concord in discord.

Thoreau's acute perception of the concrete and specific in nature helps him in the transliteration and verification of his transcendental

vision. But he must "see" fully and thoroughly an object or a phenomenon and be saturated with its truth before being able to seek an inner affirmation or some sort of manifestation of the divine will — this latter undertaking perhaps, then, becomes more reassuring and fulfilling. Let us consider a passage from "The Bean-Field":

The nighthawk circled overhead in the sunny afternoons — for I sometimes made a day of it — like a mote in the eye, or in heaven's eye, falling from time to time with a swoop and a sound as if the heavens were rent, torn at last to very rags and tatters, and yet a seamless cope remained; small imps that fill the air and lay their eggs on the ground on bare sand or rocks on the tops of hills, where few have found them; graceful and slender like ripples caught up from the pond, as leaves are raised by the wind to float in the heavens; such kindredship is in nature. The hawk is aerial brother of the wave which he sails over and surveys, those his perfect air-inflated wings answering to the elemental unfledged pinions of the sea. (W, 175-176)

The simile "a mote in the eye or in heaven's eye" and the following images of its occasional falling "with a swoop and sound" and rending of the heavens are striking, dramatic and pictorial reproductions of sensory-perception. The night-hawk falls from the sky, as must a mote from the eye. It is incapable of deciphering the mystery of the heavens since "a seamless cope" still remains to be penetrated. Though it lives on other animals, it is "aerial brother of the wave." Such delicate and romantic imagery as "graceful and slender like ripples caught up from the pond, as leaves are raised by the wind to float in the heavens" suggests the type of "kindredship" in nature, that Thoreau endeavours to explore.

One may however note Thoreau's use of circular images of movement, heaven and eye. Sun, moon, earth, lakes and ponds are some of the other

prominent images of circularity frequently occurring in Walden. The circle has been considered as symbolic of the mythological conceptualization of the design of all creation. The ancient Hindus, the Greeks and the Egyptians had since long believed that the cosmos and cosmological reality were conceived as circular in form, with God as the central nucleus. The Pythagorean concept of universe or the theory of "mandalas" was based on the presumption that every creation, since it possesses a nucleus or a centre of origination, is circular. Even the very nature of life and death was supposed to be following a circular pattern. According to the concept of "mandalas," one perceives as well as creates in "mandalas"; therefore, every creation has some central nucleus and a circumferential life, as suggested by the soul-body, God-universe, microcosm-macrocosm and other similar relationships. Each circle by virtue of its original creative force and inner-outer tension becomes full of life, unity and harmony. The circle as a unit of perception and creation constituted an important part of the cosmogonical belief and epistemological idealism of the seventeenth-century metaphysical writers and the later transcendentalists.⁴ In the following passage, the comparison of a lake with "earth's eye" is one of the numerous examples of Thoreau's vision characterized by circularity:

A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluviatile trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around are its overhanging brows. (W, 206-207)

The central emphasis is on the metaphor of "eye" with which Thoreau

perceives organic unity in nature — "the fluviatile trees" are the eyelashes and "the wooded hills and cliffs" the brows. This eye provides a true index of one's growth, and is more transparent and reflective than the physical eye. In this sense, it corresponds with the inner eye in its function of development and transformation. But, as Thoreau perceives this duality of eye, the suggestiveness of the image about the maturity and crystallization of the inner eye becomes more emphatic.

Although Thoreau says that Walden Pond is somewhat irregular in shape, but considered from the overall impression conveyed by the images, it is circular, and so are the other ponds — they are circular oceans of eternity. Both Walden Pond and White Pond are described as wells (W, 199, 203, and 328). This is how Thoreau pictures Walden Pond by allusive and romantic images of divine purity and eternality:

Perhaps on that spring morning when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden Walden Pond was already in existence, and even then breaking up in a gentle spring rain accompanied with mist and a southerly wind, and covered with myriads of ducks and geese, which had not heard of the fall, when still such pure lakes sufficed them. Even then it had commenced to rise and fall, and had clarified its waters and colored them of the hue they now wear, and obtained a patent of Heaven to be the only Walden Pond in the world and distiller of celestial dew. Who knows in how many unremembered nations' literatures this has been the Castalian Fountain? or what nymphs presided over it in the Golden Age? (W, 199)

The allusion to the myth of fall and such characterization as "a patent of heaven" and "distiller of celestial dew" are symbolic of Thoreau's perception of the immortal and spiritual nature of Walden Pond. The punning on the word "fall" makes the imagery more vivid and ironical.

As the fall of Adam and Eve symbolizes incarnation of divine essence, hence, the cause and occasion of human creation, so does the fall in the pond naturally anticipate the oncoming stage of rise, and is, as such, an important step in the revitalization and recreation of the pond. However, the irony is that Walden Pond has been in existence much before the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden and it has been experiencing the phenomena of "rise and fall," which was hitherto unknown to the "myriads of ducks and geese." In nature, the phenomenon of fall is older and does not have any connotations of sin as it does in Christianity in general. The chemical image of distillation suggests four stages: mixing of elements, heating, separating the essences and condensation. As a result of the process of natural distillation, the water of the pond is not only pure and transparent, but is also endowed with the unique power of poetic inspiration like the water of "the Castalian Fountain." As Thoreau tells us that "this water is of such crystalline purity that the body of the bather appears of an alabaster whiteness, still more unnatural, which, as the limbs are magnified and distorted withal, produces a monstrous effect, making fit studies for a Michael Angelo" (W, 197). The images of "crystalline purity," "alabaster whiteness" and of metamorphic changes in the body of the bather suggest the divine power of Walden's water to transform, purify and create.

Thoreau's sensitive eye tries to arrest the phenomena of multiple colours in nature, particularly those associated with Walden Pond. Imbued with keen and untiring curiosity, he observes the dramatic changes and

the effects of such factors as distance, light and air in colour-formation:

Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the color of both. Viewed from a hilltop it reflects the color of the sky; but near at hand it is of a yellowish tint next the shore where you can see the sand, then a light green, which gradually deepens to a uniform dark green in the body of the pond. In some lights, viewed even from a hilltop, it is of a vivid green next the shore. Some have referred this to the reflection of the verdure; but it is equally green there against the railroad sand-bank, and in the spring, before the leaves are expanded, and it may be simply the result of the prevailing blue mixed with the yellow of the sand. Such is the color of its iris ... I have discerned a matchless and indescribable light blue, such as watered or changeable silks and sword blades suggest, more cerulean than the sky itself, alternating with the original dark green on the opposite sides of the waves, which last appeared but muddy in comparison. It is a vitreous greenish blue . . . (W, 196-197)

Green is the symbol of life and blue the symbol of purity. The fused image "vitreous greenish blue," therefore, quite significantly suggests transparency, vitality and purity as attributes of Walden Pond — as is also indicated by the romantic notion: "Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the color of both." Thoreau pictures the luxuriant panorama of diffused colours of the different positions in the pond, including its "iris," first from a "hilltop" and then from a closer position. The images: "a matchless and indescribable light blue," "as watered or changeable silks and sword blades," and "more cerulean than the sky itself," are examples of instantaneous and ecstatic rendering of the sensory-perceptions. A similar acute perception of colours, emphasizing the purity and transparency of Walden Pond, finds expression in the following passage:

Like the water, the Walden ice, seen near at hand, has a green tint, but at a distance is beautifully blue, and you can easily tell it from the white ice of the river, or the merely greenish ice of some ponds, a quarter of a mile off. Sometimes one of those great cakes slips from the ice-man's sled into the village street, and lies there for a week like a great emerald, an object of interest to all passers. I have noticed that a portion of Walden which in the state of water was green will often, when frozen, appear from the same point of view blue. So the hollows about this pond will, sometimes, in the winter, be filled with a greenish water somewhat like its own, but the next day will have frozen blue. Perhaps the blue color of water and ice is due to the light and air they contain, and the most transparent is the bluest. (W, 327)

Waldon Pond, we are told, is "a perfect forest mirror," "a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quick silver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs . . . a mirror in which impurity, presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by sun's hazy brush" (W, 209). For purposes of self preservation, "Squaw Walden" (W, 235) is perfectly capable of taking her revenge on those who try to molest her. "Nevertheless, of all the characters I have known," observes Thoreau, "perhaps Walden wears best, and best preserves its purity" (W, 214). Its unquestionable purity and divine character are stressed by one of the most subtly compressed Emersonian metaphors: "God's Drop."⁵ About its unique value, Thoreau's pronouncement deserves to be noted: "White Pond and Walden are great crystals on the surface of the earth, Lakes of Light" (W, 221 — see Chapter II, 46 for detailed discussion of this sentence and the following passage).

Added to this band of extremely eulogistic and reverential metaphors and images is the following complex and metaphorical passage

perhaps, the most climactic and hymnal so far as the Walden symbol is concerned — the style of which indicates Browne's direct influence⁶ on Thoreau:

Thus it appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston and New Orleans, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence, so remote is its sublimity from our conceptions. I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Bramin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or dwells at the root of a tree with his crust and water jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets as it were grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges. With favouring winds it is wafted past the site of the fabulous islands of Atlantis and the Hesperides, makes the periplus of Hanno, and, floating by Ternate and Tidore and the mouth of the Persian Gulf, melts in the tropic gales of the Indian seas, and is landed in ports of which Alexander only heard the names. (W, 328-329)

This is a brilliant metaphorical use of the concrete historical fact of the transportation of ice to stress the divine characteristics of Walden's water. Walden is visualized as a holy well whose water is so pure that it can serve the needs of the "priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra," and can favourably compare and metaphorically mingle with the sacred water of the Ganges. Like the Ganges, Walden becomes instrumental in Thoreau's search for transcendental identity and universal reality. Indeed, Thoreau has double advantage of the pure and divine water of Walden and the "stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta,"

and through these he can envision that Spirituality and the Creativity of which the Ganges and Walden Pond are manifestations. To say that, as Thoreau benefits from the divine wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita, so does the Indian priest from Walden's ice,⁷ is to misinterpret the metaphorical expressions and to belittle the real intentions of the passage, which, as stated above, seem to be to affirm the divine stature of Walden Pond as a transparent medium of perceiving Unity and Oneness — that is how Thoreau comprehends an identity between the Ganges and Walden Pond. But if the analogy is not "labored," it is because Thoreau does not seem to have intended such a comparison.⁸ The romantic and allusive imagery of the journey of Walden's ice — "wafted," "floating," "melts" and "landed," conveys its dramatic urge to mingle with the sacred water of the Ganges. With this mythical transfiguration, the pond achieves universality as does the self on merging with the Eternal Brahman. As the merger is accomplished, we note Thoreau's feelings of spiritual relaxation, as evident from the tone of the imagery in the last sentence.

Hence, Walden Pond is a symbol of the Self, the Atman, that Thoreau is anxious to explore to its maximum depth. The gnostic imagery of the well and bucket is indicative of Thoreau's urge of reaching that depth which again is symbolic of purity. "I am thankful," observes Thoreau that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol" (W, 316). Once we understand the significance of his central symbol, it is easier to appreciate Thoreau's strong emphasis on "austerest purity" and other moral and spiritual principles, especially those contained in the chapters

on "Economy" and "Higher Laws." The Self, the Atman like the spirit of Walden Pond, is a sacred thing to be revered. It cannot dwell in impurity. As Thoreau illustrates with the help of the most appropriate architectural imagery:

Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body, to the god he worships, after a style purely his own, nor can he get off by hammering marble instead. We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones. Any nobleness begins at once to refine a man's features, any meanness or sensuality to imbrute them. (W, 245)

Surely, the "temple" should be as pure as the spirit that resides in it, for there cannot be any union of the pure with the impure. In fact, this is the crux of the yogic thought and practice. Purity is further emphasized in the following passage:

The generative energy, which, when we are loose, dissipates and makes us unclean, when we are continent invigorates and inspires us. Chastity is the flowering of man; and what are called Genius, Heroism, Holiness, and the like, are but various fruits which succeed it. Man flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open. (W, 243)

The purity of the pond is therefore "emblematic" of inner purity, and ultimately a means of seeking affinity with God. With the freezing of the pond in winter, the loose and fluid state of the self is arrested, and transformed and crystallized into a firm and passionless intellect; thus, the ice of the pond becomes symbolic of inner purity and comprehensiveness:

Ice is an interesting subject for contemplation. They told me that they had some in the ice-houses at Fresh Pond five years old which was as good as ever. Why is it that a bucket

of water soon becomes putrid, but frozen remains sweet forever? It is commonly said that this is the difference between the affections and the intellect." (W, 327-328)

In the icy bottom of the pond, Thoreau discovers an atmosphere of divine serenity:

Standing on the snow-covered plain, as if in a pasture amid the hills, I cut my way first through a foot of snow, and then a foot of ice, and open a window under my feet, where, kneeling to drink, I look down into the quiet parlor of the fishes, pervaded by a softened light as through a window of ground glass, with its bright sanded floor the same as in summer; there a perennial waveless serenity reigns as in the amber twilight sky, corresponding to the cool and even temperament of the inhabitants. Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads. (W, 313)

The spectacular and sensuous image: "a perennial waveless serenity reigns within the ice, as in the sky," suggests the type of heavenly and inspiring level that Thoreau aspires to develop within his own self. No doubt, the abhorrence of sensual passions is the crux of puritan ethics, but Thoreau is not interested in preaching any particular code. The concern for purity is a "private business" and is perhaps directed to the attainment of an experience which is echoed in the Bhagavad Gita:

Utterly quiet,
Made clean of passion,
The mind of the yogi
Knows that Brahman,
His bliss is the highest.⁹

With the coming of spring, there is a resurgence of new life in the pond, a new creation in nature with its multiplicity of forms. And Thoreau observes the phenomena of mutability, metamorphoses and creation with mixed feelings of awe and reverence, tension and relief, and wonder and delight. In the following passage, Thoreau observes the melting of ice:

In spring the sun not only exerts an influence through the increased temperature of the air and earth, but its heat passes through ice a foot or more thick, and is reflected from the bottom in shallow water, and so also warms the water and melts the under side of the ice, at the same time that it is melting it more directly above, making it uneven, and causing the air bubbles which it contains to extend themselves upward and downward until it is completely honeycombed, and at last disappears suddenly in a single spring rain. Ice has its grain as well as wood, and when a cake begins to rot or "comb," that is, assume the appearance of honeycomb, whatever may be its position, the air cells are at right angles with what was the water surface. . . . When a warm rain in the middle of the winter melts off the snow ice from Walden, and leaves a hard dark or transparent ice on the middle, there will be a strip of rotten though thicker white ice, a rod or more wide, about the shores, created by this reflected heat. Also, as I have said, the bubbles themselves within the ice operate as burning-glasses to melt the ice beneath. (W, 331-332)

The imagery is specific and sensuous. Thoreau notes the breaking of ice into "honeycombs," their structure and the reaction of sun, rain, light and air on the process; as if with the coming of spring all elements in nature have become alive and active and forged a common bond of creation. Here is another passage, describing a similar experience at Flints' Pond:

. . . that when I struck the ice with the head of my axe, it resounded like a gong for many rods around, or as if I had struck on a tight drum-head. The pond began to boom about an hour after sunrise, when it felt the influence of the sun's rays slanted upon it from over the hills; it stretched itself and yawned like a waking man with a gradually increasing tumult, which was kept up three or four hours. It took a short siesta at noon, and boomed once more toward night, as the sun was withdrawing his influence. (W, 332-333)

But first Thoreau makes the day as "an epitome of the year," such that "the night is the winter, the morning and evening are the spring and fall, and the noon the summer," and then with the help of this scaled compendium,

he studies the phenomena of "the cracking and booming of the ice." The tension of this metaphorical scaling is lent immediately to bear upon the phenomenal behaviour of the pond on a spring day as well as during the year. The inorganic pond is compared with the organic man; in fact, it is made organic. The auditory images: "resounding like a gong," "struck on a tight drum-head" and boom (repeated twice) are orphic reminders of the approaching new birth and its temporary cessation. The booming of the morning is no more different from the booming of the evening, though the two signify contrasting phenomena. The kinesthetic images: "stretched," "yawned," and "withdrawing," suggest the nature of the inner movement of dissolution and contraction. The commotion and agitation build up gradually into the climactic vitality of the noon, only to subside in the evening. Thus, the pond is perceived to be following the same pattern of life as the man does. Not only that, as the year is dramatically scaled into a day, so is the universe localized and condensed into the pond, suggesting unity and oneness of spirit in the multiplicity of forms in nature, yet noting their specific modes and manifestations. This unique treatment of time and space adds to the intensity and immediacy of the total imagery in the passage.

Walden has a "thick new garment," and Flints' Pond is "thick-skinned." But they are extremely sensitive, more particularly in spring when Thoreau's sensitive ear can "hear the ice crack at night with a startling whoop as loud as artillery, as if its icy fetters were rent from end to end, and within a few days see it rapidly going out" (W, 334).

The phenomena of thawing and the emerging of new forms, the two main characteristics of spring, fascinate Thoreau, not merely as an ecologist but more as an artist who, standing in "the laboratory of the Artist," keenly observes Him at work in the process of creation to decipher the mysteries, principles and techniques — the overall design, so that he can apply these to his own art. Let us consider the processes of mixing and moulding of matter, leading to the formation of sand banks:

The material was sand of every degree of fineness and of various rich colors, commonly mixed with a little clay. When the frost comes out in the spring, and even in a thawing day in the winter, the sand begins to flow down the slopes like lava, sometimes bursting out through the snow and overflowing it where no sand was to be seen before. Innumerable little streams overlap and interlace one with another, exhibiting a sort of hybrid product, which obeys half way the law of currents, and half way that of vegetation. As it flows it takes the forms of sappy leaves or vines, making heaps of pulpy sprays a foot or more in depth, and resembling, as you look down on them, the lacinated, lobed, and imbricated thalluses of some lichens; or you are reminded of coral, of leopards' paws or birds' feet, of brains or lungs or bowels, and excrements of all kinds. . . . When the flowing mass reaches the drain at the foot of the bank it spreads out flatter into strands, the separate streams losing their semi-cylindrical form and gradually becoming more flat and broad, running together as they are more moist, till they form an almost flat sand, still variously and beautifully shaded, but in which you can trace the original forms of vegetation; till at length, in the water itself, they are converted into banks, like those formed off the mouths of rivers, and the forms of vegetation are lost in the ripple-marks on the bottom. (W, 336-337)

It is picturesque rendering of an endless and continuous process of change and formation. The imagery is mostly visual and kinesthetic, and the metaphors are of the "creative tradition." The imagery of eroding,

sliding, flowing, mixing, piling, overlapping, interlacing, dissolving and emerging, suggest the well-regulated principle of creation out of "chaos,"¹⁰ as also the fact that all forms in nature are basically created alike and out of the same original source. The formation and resultant shapes of vegetation are compared with those of the animal organism. Thoreau notes every small mark of transition and progression in the various stages of formation. But it is "an anticipation of the vegetable leaf in every sand" and the act of "its springing into existence thus suddenly" that excite and delight Thoreau, who seems to be fully aware of the intensity and importance of these psychological moments in a work of art. Perhaps it can be stated that the phenomenon of thawing marks the state of anticipation and tension whereas spring characterizes birth, relief and joy.

Thoreau wonders about the "patented" phenomenon of a leaf and regards it as a symbol of all creation, organic and inorganic:

No wonder that the earth expresses itself outwardly in leaves, it so labors with the idea inwardly. The atoms have already learned this law, and are pregnant by it. The overhanging leaf sees here its prototype. . . . Even ice begins with delicate crystal leaves, as if it had flowed into moulds which the fronds of water-plants have impressed on the watery mirror. The whole tree itself is but one leaf, and rivers are still vaster leaves whose pulp is intervening earth, and towns and cities are the ova of insects in their axils. (W, 338)

In fact, this is what prompts Thoreau to declare that "there is nothing inorganic"¹¹ in nature. Every single object in nature including Thoreau himself is a leaf and it follows the same process of birth and dissolution.

The passage presents profoundly sensuous and intelligible imagery, not of static and still-born life, but of continuous and dynamic transformation and growth. The phenomena of metamorphoses and creation thus perceived are an affirmation of Thoreau's transcendental vision which purports cosmic consciousness and unity.

Spring is the symbol of hope and new life. The songs of the birds of spring as opposed to those of their winter counterparts are expressions of joy and hymns of praise. This is how Thoreau marks the rebirth of Walden:

Walden is melting apace. There is a canal two rods wide along the northerly and westerly sides, and wider still at the east end. A great field of ice has cracked off from the main body. I hear a song sparrow singing from the bushes on the shore, — olit, olit, olit, — chip, chip, chip, che char, — che wiss, wiss, wiss. He too is helping to crack it. How handsome the great sweeping curves in the edge of the ice, answering somewhat to those of the shore, but more regular! . . . It is glorious to behold this ribbon water sparkling in the sun, the bare face of the pond full of glee and youth, as if it spoke the joy of the fishes within it, and of sands on its shore, — a silvery sheen as from the scales of a leuciscus, as it were all one active fish. Such is the contrast between winter and spring. Walden was dead and is alive again. But this spring it broke up more steadily, as I have said. (W, 343-344)

The image of "cracking off" suggests the release of life, which is further facilitated by the singing of a song-sparrow. Then follow the ecstatic images of gleaming and exultant joy: ". . . ribbon of water sparkling in the sun," "bare face . . . full of glee and youth," and "a silvery sheen . . ."; the last of these is an extremely poetic image, resulting from the association of the joyful fishes and the bright

shiny sands. The image "the bare face of the pond full of glee and youth" provides a photographic and instantaneous contrast between the attributes of winter and spring. As Walden regains life, so does Thoreau, the artist.

Spring is now in full bloom and Thoreau rejoices the luxuriant and vivid spectacle of creation. His rejuvenated feelings at the glorious and colourful growth are best expressed in the following passage:

The sulphur-like pollen of the pitch pine soon covered the pond and the stones and rotten wood along the shore, so that you could have collected a barrellful. This is the "sulphur showers" we hear of. Even in Calidas' drama of Sacontala, we read of "rills dyed yellow with the golden dust of the lotus." And so the seasons went rolling on into summer, as one rambles into higher and higher grass. (W, 351)

At the literal level, it is a highly sensuous colour imagery; the marked comparison of the covering of the pond with "the sulphur-like pollen of the pitch pine" with the "rills dyed yellow with the golden dust of the lotus," makes it vivid and enchanting. However, the magnanimity and subtlety of meaning lie in the two symbols — the alchemic symbol of "sulphur" and the Eastern symbol of "lotus." Sulphur is "symbolic of the desire for positive action, and vital heat."¹² As one of the stages in the process of alchemy (the evolution of human psyche), the introduction of sulphur represents "more profound purification, reason, and intuition," anticipating the next stage of "the Great Work, or transcendence." If we accept this explanation, "the sulphur-like pollen," the excess of which is further alluded to as "sulphur showers," suggests

the achievement of the highest stage of purification, the blossoming of the powers in nature and, hence, in Thoreau himself. The complex symbolism of lotus, as used in the Indian mythology, has several interpretations. As being closely related to the "mandalas," it is symbolic of the nature of creation and spiritual experience. Its unfolding symbolizes the realization of inner potentialities and truth. At the more complex level, "the lotus flower growing out of the navel of Vishnu, symbolizes the universe growing out of the central sun."¹³ In this sense, its opening and flowering would suggest divine enlightenment and creation — "the idea of emanation and of realization." The "golden dust of the lotus," therefore, signifies the fruition of intuition, imagination, enlightenment and divine essence. The comparison of the "sulphur-like pollen" with "the golden dust of the lotus," indeed, heightens the emphasis on the nature of divine growth and fruition in nature; therefore, symbolically, it suggests a similar experience of the blossoming of intellect, intuition and imagination in Thoreau himself. The coverage of the pond is another subtle suggestion, implying, perhaps, that the purity of the pond need be permanently preserved by "the sulphur-like pollen."

To sum up: the imagery and symbolism in Walden serve an important purpose of communicating and revivifying the truth. Most of the metaphors and symbols and the resulting imagery essentially belong to the "creative tradition"; they are characteristic of Thoreau's romantic-transcendental imagination and epistemological idealism; and,

too, they are transfigurations of the reality, as well as representations of Thoreau's cosmogonal and mythic consciousness. It may be noted that the material used for drawing comparisons and analogies is taken from living experience with nature. Consequently, we have fresh, invigorating and vivid metaphors of original experience — emanating from an "original relationship" with nature. The metaphors and symbols, intrinsic as they are to Thoreau's artistic impulse and perception, enhance the intelligibility, comprehensiveness and universality of both expression and meaning in Walden.

The imagery in Walden is extremely sensuous; one encounters some of the most vivid, translucent and photographic recordings of the sense-perceptions. The images, generated by the concrete and specific objects or phenomena, convey particularity and uniqueness of thought and emotion; they lead us from the particular to the general and to the universal, and thus determine the movement in Walden. Most of the imagery in Walden can be characterized as auditory, kinesthetic and visual, though the general emphasis is more on the visual than on the other two types.

It is probably clear from the discussion in this chapter that Thoreau employs imagery and symbolism, not as artificial and mechanical devices but as sincere and genuine media of an imaginative experience. An important feature of style in Walden is the imagistic and symbolistic unity, in each chapter, as well as in the total work. Indeed, this is one way of establishing unity in Walden. Besides, the imagery and symbolism are fully congruous with the theme. It should be noted that the complex

and subtle symbolism in Walden is closely allied to, rather ingeniously directed to the strengthening of the central symbol of the Walden Pond.

One may be justified in assuming that to read Walden is to read the language of symbols. Thus, to get to the heart of the meaning of Thoreau's subjective experience and to share its intensity and subtlety, one must be prepared to decipher these symbols. For example, Thoreau, in the following sentence, by using extremely intricate and baffling symbols, transforms the facts of his few failures into a "mythic record": "I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail" (W, 18). Van Doren's explanation that Thoreau's "quest was not for any metaphysical entity . . . that this single disappointment of his life was not an intellectual but an emotional one . . . His ideal was perfection in human intercourse, and his quest was for an absolutely satisfactory condition of friendship,"¹⁴ is too literal — also somewhat biographical and psychoanalytical. Peairs's attempt to attribute the source of these symbols to Voltair's Zadig¹⁵ seems to be far-fetched. Davidson's suggestion that the "whole concept of the bay horse may be a mingling of classical myth and Swiftian fantasy" and that "the hound, the bay horse, and the turtle-dove seem to be respectively for Thoreau symbols of a wildness that keeps man in touch with nature, intellectual stimulus, and purification of spirit,"¹⁶ is also untenable, mainly because it does not lead us anywhere. For one thing, Thoreau would not entertain the Cartesianism of the Houyhnhnms as an attribute of the self, or even as a desirable quality. Canby's interpretation that Thoreau "is clearly describing a search for no

lost maid or boy, but for that sense of spiritual reality behind nature, which again and again in his Journal he deplores as something felt in youth, but never quite regained,"¹⁷ still appears to be the most valid of all. Expressions such as these no doubt present difficulties of interpretation, but at the same time they make the style more challenging and involving. Hence, the symbolic and mythic style of Walden is so fascinating and intriguing that the more one is able to penetrate into the meaning of the symbolic and metaphorical expressions, the more one can enjoy the mysterious and the ecstatic depths of Thoreau's imagination and "extravagance." But the effort as such demands of the reader a degree of learning that Thoreau stipulates quite definitively in the chapter on "Reading," as well as an intuitive perception, and inner capacity to reciprocate.

CHAPTER IV

THE NARRATIVE AND THE ARGUMENT

As a biography of Thoreau's extremely lyrical experience of inner exploration and search for universal reality and truth, Walden presents an interesting and subtle blend of highly intellectual and witty thought, illustrative anecdotes, observed concrete facts rendered into allegories of truth, photographic and dramatic records of sense-perceptions, and historical and mythological allusions. As observed earlier, the experience with nature is only a means of achieving the "widest possible intelligibility"¹ through transcendence and contemplation. Such devices as paradox, pun, thesis and anti-thesis, understatement, exaggeration, irony and analogy are essential elements of Thoreau's extremely rhetorical and witty style in Walden. We must remember Thoreau's postulates of "great prose."² The matter of narrative also entails the study of such techniques as arrangements and organization in relation to the development and progression. The questions of unity, cohesion and variety are no less important. It therefore remains to be seen how Thoreau reports experience and truth.

"He [Thoreau] was probably reminded by his delicate critical perception," points out Stevenson, "that the true business is with narrative; in reasoned narrative, and there alone, that art enjoys all its advantages, and suffers least from its defects. Dry percepts and dismembered disquisition, as they can only be read with an effort of

abstraction," adds Stevenson, "can never convey a perfectly natural impression. Truth, even in literature, must be clothed with flesh and blood, or it cannot tell its whole story to the reader. Hence the effect of anecdote on simple minds."³ Indeed, one would agree with Stevenson's observation about Thoreau's deep interest in the narrative technique, but not with the suggestion that the fable or anecdote is used to make the narrative more simple or readily comprehensible for a "simple" mind. As it is clear from the earlier discussion, Walden is a complex and deliberate work of art, extremely challenging, thought provoking, symbolic and mythological. Its apparent simplicity which has perhaps led many critics to treat it as a mere chronicle of events or a handbook of natural history, is deceptive. For Thoreau's repeated emphasis on the highest degree of contemplation and the cloaking of facts with "poetic veil," so that they acquire universal and mythological significance, makes it abundantly clear that he never intended to cater to such simple or common sense as Stevenson implies. In this regard, Thoreau's own observation deserves our consideration:

Why level downward to our dullest perception always, and praise that as common sense? The commonest sense is the sense of men asleep, which they express by snoring. Sometimes we are inclined to class those who are once-and-a-half-witted with the half-witted, because we appreciate only a third part of their wit. Some would find fault with the morning red, if they ever got up early enough. "They pretend," as I hear, "that the verses of Kabir have four different senses; illusion, spirit, intellect, and the exoteric doctrine of the Vedas;" but in this part of the world it is considered a ground for complaint if a man's writings admit of more than one interpretation. (W, 357-358)

This is somewhat similar to Blake's definition of "the Most Sublime Poetry" as Allegory addressed to the intellectual powers, while it is altogether hidden from the Corporeal Understanding. . . ."⁴

In the beginning of the chapter on "Economy," Thoreau, while indicating the nature of experience he is going to narrate, justifies rather boldly the use of the first person "I" as a narrator. "We commonly do not remember," reminds Thoreau rather ironically, "that it is after all always the first person that is speaking" (W, 3). Thoreau maintains that "a simple and sincere account" of one's life can only be rendered by the "I" of the artist, even though it may smack of "egotism." The recurring use of "I" throughout the text is an imagistic psychological projection of the self, which, as compared to the third person narrator, undoubtedly helps in achieving immediately a direct contact with the reader, as well as an identity with the materials presented, automatically affirming their authenticity and sincerity, the qualities which are of so vital concern to Thoreau. Thus, such a narrative is highly personal and reveals the character of its narrator. But above all, it is the hero-artist who, following the romantic-mythic tradition, is the narrator of his own subjective experience, which includes the real and actual experience of living at Walden, and that of transforming the factual into the mythic and the symbolic. The hero-bard is therefore the communicant of the total experience; in a way, he has the distinct advantage of expressing his original emotions and ideas in a more direct and intense

form with the bardic rage, sincerity and intensity — the qualities which Thoreau admires so much in the works of a hero-bard.⁵

After a few critical and startling interludes, we are confronted with a thesis statement: "Most men, even in this comparatively free country, through mere ignorance and mistake, are so occupied with the factitious cares and superfluously coarse labors of life that its finer fruits cannot be plucked by them" (W, 6). Therefrom, Thoreau undertakes a comprehensive dissection of the argument concerning economy and living, alternately positing a prevailing notion or a precept and rebutting it with his own affirmation. Here is one of Thoreau's characteristic methods of floating an argument:

One farmer says to me, "You cannot live on vegetable food solely, for it furnishes nothing to make bones with;" and so he religiously devotes a part of his day to supplying his system with the raw material of bones; walking all the while he talks behind his oxen, which, with vegetable-made bones, jerk him and his lumbering plow along in spite of every obstacle. Some things are really diseased, which in others are luxuries merely, and in others still are entirely unknown. (W, 10)

With an extremely well-reasoned, ironical and compact analogy of the strength of the "vegetable-made bones" of the farmer's own oxen, Thoreau not only completely and convincingly demolishes the argument for a non-vegetarian diet but uses it as springboard for a positive statement.

To "the mass of men" who, having chosen deliberately a purposeless life, are now labouring under a delusion of the "no choice left," or "the only way" situation, Thoreau's exhortation for change and new hope is clearly sounded — "there are as many ways as there can be

drawn radii from the one centre." This is supported by a terse quotation from Confucius: "To know that we know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge" (W, 10). Thoreau's love for the epistemological and spiritual ideas of Confucius, Mencius or Skeikh Sadi reflects his broad and dynamic temperament which is eagerly and constantly searching for new possibilities that the readers are enjoined to share. This method of logic — of starting from a particular fact and examining all the available evidence before arriving at a conclusion, is certainly Baconian and not Aristotelian. And yet we note the repeated and quick returns to intuitive and Platonic patterns of thought, which are typical of transcendental logic and perception. To make his argument more vivid and incisive, Thoreau frequently makes use of witty, sharp and definitive comparisons, and carefully constructed analogies. There are necessities of life as opposed to the gross necessities. "By the words, necessary of life," remarks Thoreau, "I mean whatever, of all that man obtains by his own exertions, has been from the first, or from long use has become; so important to human life that few, if any, whether from savageness, or poverty, or philosophy, ever attempt to do without it" (W, 13). And this definition is supported by series of analogies: "To the bison of the prairie it is a few inches of palatable grass with water to drink; . . ." (W, 13). Shelter and clothing are only relevant for the preservation of internal heat and this is asserted by such complete yet compact and concret analogies as:

So, we are told, the New Hollander goes naked with impunity, while the European shivers in his clothes. Is it impossible

to combine the hardness of these savages with the intellectualness of the civilized man? According to Liebig, man's body is a stove, and food the fuel which keeps up the internal combustion in the lungs. In cold weather we eat more, in warm less. The animal heat is the result of a slow combustion, and disease and death take place when this is too rapid; or for want of fuel, or from some defect in the draught, the fire goes out. Of course the vital heat is not to be confounded with the fire; but so much for analogy. It appears, therefore, from the above list, that the expression, animal life, is nearly synonymous with the expression, animal heat; . . . (W, 14)

No doubt, Emerson in his essay on "Nature" emphasizes the importance of analogy as a means of establishing intellectual correspondence, but so far as the art of perfecting it is concerned, Thoreau seems to have been influenced by Mencius' techniques of "multiple definition."⁶

The anecdotal references to some of the personal experiences (W, 18-21) of trial and error, apart from extending a reassuring evidence of Thoreau's genuine search, are a rhetorical device of gaining that dramatic movement of exit and entrance, which makes the narrative alive and dynamic, thus exciting the reader's curiosity and interest to anticipate and receive the actual experience. Thoreau then proceeds to examine the nature of man's need for food, clothing and shelter, ironically revealing with the help of historical, mythological and contemporary allusions and parallels the monstrous superstructure of needs and compulsions that man has built around him, only to barter his freedom of spirit and be a virtual prisoner in it. Such techniques as terse parallels and contrasts and witty anecdotes are important constituents of the rhetorical and philosophical style of Walden; they not only make the subject matter more comprehensive and varied but also help in

presenting it in a fascinating and logical manner. Thus, we notice a special quality and a type of narrative — witty and anecdotal, serene yet provocative, developing out of Thoreau's transcendental logic and aphoristic style. However, it may be noted that Thoreau does not indulge in summary dismissals, sweeping generalizations or hasty assumptions, but following closely Hegelian dialectics and the contrapuntal method of disposition, he builds subtle intellectual argument for a higher life of truth and beauty. As it may be evident from the following passage:

But lo! men have become tools of their tools. The man who independently plucked the fruits when he was hungry is become a farmer; and he who stood under a tree for shelter, a house-keeper. We now no longer camp as for a night, but have settled down on earth and forgotten heaven. We have adopted Christianity merely as an improved method of agri-culture. We have built for this world a family mansion, and for the next a family tomb. The best works of art are the expression of man's struggle to free himself from this condition, but the effect of our art is merely to make this low state comfortable and that higher state to be forgotten. (W, 41)

Much of the pungency and sharpness of expression is achieved by the use of thesis and antithesis, and series of ironical contrasts. It may be mentioned that Thoreau employs here the point-counter-point method of developing and furthering the narrative — adding or raising a point, providing a thesis or an antithesis, and, finally, merging it into the body of the narrative. The transition from one sentence to another is brisk and cohesive. We must note the startling effect achieved by the punning on the words "tools," and "agri-culture"; in the latter case it is etymological punning, a device for which Thoreau shows a special fondness. The witty sarcasm of the sentence: "We have adopted

Christianity merely as an improved method of agri-culture," mainly generated by this philological punning resounds not only in this paragraph but in the entire chapter on "Economy," — one must pause for a while, perhaps a bit astounded and shocked to consider the implications of this subtle observation.

It may be noted that Thoreau's irony stems from his "perception of identity," rather than from Kantian or Cartesian dualism, or some despondent vision. For Thoreau's cosmic vision does not admit any such permanent dualism; however, he does make use of people's dualistic beliefs and practices as materials for sarcasm and irony. But if we see any duality at all in Thoreau, that is only a temporary phenomenon which is immediately reconciled. His irony reveals and magnifies such differences and incongruities as are discerned between faith and practice, profession and deed, and truth and non-truth. Hence, his irony is positive, rather than being an expression of a vision of despair or nihilism. Thoreau can be so ironical and sarcastic that one cannot help but feel the intensity of a divine rage flowing into his eloquent argument — as for example, in the following two excerpts:

A great proportion of architectural ornaments are literally hollow, and a September gale would strip them off, like borrowed plumes, with injury to the substantials. They can do without architecture who have no olives nor wines in the cellar. What if an equal ado were made about the ornaments of style in literature, and the architects of our bibles spent as much time about their cornices as the architects of our churches do? So are made the belles-letters and the beaux-arts and their professors. (W, 52-53)

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When men begin to do, not merely unnecessary or artistic, but luxurious and idle work, with their assistance, it is inevitable that a few do all the exchange work with the oxen, or, in other words, become the slaves of the strongest. Man thus not only works for the animal within him, but, for a symbol of this, he works for the animal without him. Though we have many substantial houses of brick or stone, the prosperity of the farmer is still measured by the degree to which the barn overshadows the house. This town is said to have the largest houses for oxen, cows, and horses hereabouts, and it is not behindhand in its public buildings; but there are very few halls for free worship or free speech in this country. It should not be by their architecture, but why not even by their power of abstract thought, that nations should seek to commemorate themselves? How much more admirable the Bhagvat-Geeta than all the ruins of the East! Towers and temples are the luxury of princes. A simple and independent mind does not toil at the bidding of any prince. Genius is not a retainer to any emperor, nor is its material silver, or gold, or marble, except to a trifling extent. To what end, pray, is so much stone hammered? In Arcadia, when I was there, I did not see any hammering stone. (W, 63)

undoubtedly, almost every sentence is an example of superb irony; the irony of the situation resulting from our blindness to the hollowness of the "architectural ornaments" is revealed in one flash by a powerful image: "a September gale would strip them off, like borrowed plumes . . .". The ironical echoes of the compound metaphor "architectural ornaments" automatically suggest its opposite, i.e., the genuine and the inner virtues. And at once Thoreau jumps to a sensitive question which evokes the reader's judgement about the validity of importing similar artificialities into the works of literature and religion. The mood is definitely of castigation, not merely of an empty criticism but of persuasive and well-reasoned castigation, which leads us essentially to the positive and central point of the ironical argument expressed in the last sentence of the previously quoted passage: "The best works of art

are the expression of man's struggle to free himself from this condition, but the effect of our art is merely to make this low state comfortable and that higher state to be forgotten." The same ironical vein finds expression in the second passage, amplifying the theme stated earlier: "But lo! men have become tools of their tools." The contrasting metaphors of "man" and "animal," of "the animal within" and "the animal without," stress the ironical condition of man, particularly in his preferred choice of becoming the slave "of the strongest." This impression is further augmented by the extended metaphor of "architecture," thus highlighting a series of ironical truths as expressed in the last few forceful and definitive sentences. The mood of genuine lamentation of the sentence, "This town . . . but there are very few halls for free worship or free speech in this country," culminates dramatically in somewhat optimistic and exclamatory note: "How much more admirable the Bhagvat-Geeta than all the ruins of the East!" The intermingling of witty aphorism and the ironical sublime, especially of the last few sentences automatically elicits from the reader a sympathetic response, not of mild and passive acceptance but of powerful inner awakening. We may note Thoreau's contrapuntal manner of floating and resolving series of connected issues, thereby weaving a strong thread of lengthy and serpentine argument, so sustained by the concrete and specific illustrations that despite the subtlety of thought one hardly feels the crunch of a sudden loss or a slip, if there is one. We may also note how the style and thought interact, how the various narrative techniques make the argument more

resilient, invigorating and rhetorical and how the style lends itself to the making of an extremely persuasive polemic and witty and effective narrative.

However, the criticism of contemporary values and practices is not negative; it is a dialectical approach employed to re-examine and validate the truth of his own experience. Thoreau shows us how men are trapped into this vicious circle of living in a lifelong "penance," amassing the material comforts and sophistications of life without attending to the nourishment of the intellect and soul. "The grandeur of Thebes," we are told, "was a vulgar grandeur. . . Most of the stone a nation hammers goes toward its tomb only. It buries itself alive" (W, 64). And so are the other grandeurs that have led people to forsake the real and genuine grandeurs of wisdom and spirituality. Thus, the ironical contrast between Thoreau's own experience and that of "the mass of men" should enable one to understand the meaning of the words "economy" and "simplicity." Property and inheritance are considered such great disadvantages and hindrances in the preservation of one's freedom that Thoreau even goes to the extent of suggesting "a bonfire, or purifying destruction of them," or even a ritual of the "busk," as quoted at length from Bertram (W, 75). The chapter rightfully concludes with an endorsement of Sheikh Sadi's concept of spiritual freedom of the "azads," as opposed to the constant fear and concern of the philanthropists and the "redeemers and prophets": "Fix not thy heart on that which is transitory . . . if thy hand be plenty, be liberal as the date tree; but

if it affords nothing to give away, be an azad, or free man, like the cypress" (W, 88).

The argument for the freedom of the self is vigorously pursued in the following chapter on "Where I Lived, and What I Lived for." "As long as possible," declares Thoreau, "live free and uncommitted. It makes but little difference whether you are committed to a farm or the county jail" (W, 93). He does not want to share the fears and worries of overzealous reformers, but would "brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, stand on his roost, if only to wake [his] neighbours up" (W, 94). Very tactfully he throws in Krishna's advice that "there are none happy in the world but beings who enjoy freely a vast horizon," to find affirmation of the purpose of his own experience -- which he explicitly states in the following passage:

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience . . . (W, 100-101)

The statement is, indeed, as comprehensive, specific and forceful as the experience -- "to front only the essential facts of life," so that by arresting time and space and by simplifying his needs, Thoreau could search for that reality which will identify him with "Brahme."⁷ In the

wake of the intensity of this subtle metaphysical thought, such expressions as economy, simplicity, time, space and even nature appear as metaphors of experience. Thoreau makes it amply clear that simplicity no doubt implies simplifying one's needs, but essentially it is more an inner quality, a condition of voluntary acceptance by the self to subordinate instinctive and other material needs to the demands of intellect and soul. The lyrical intensity of the argument continues without any relief. Having attained this type of renunciation, he wants to utilize his time "as deliberately as Nature," without any perturbation, fear or worry. The concluding paragraph contains an eloquent and poetic summation of the main ideas of the chapter.

The opening paragraph of the chapter on "Reading" is a brilliant philosophical recapitulation of the theme of the preceding chapter. By a somewhat subtle allusion to his own experience of having shared the divine and eternal wisdom of the Egyptian or Hindu classics, Thoreau introduces us to the necessity of serious reading. He envies Mir Camar Uddin Mast's spiritual experience of having "drunk the liquor of the esoteric doctrines," and wants to share this vision. In a highly persuasive and terse argument, Thoreau castigates the reading of cheap and shallow books. Not only this, he hastens to lay down the criteria of a good book and of good reading. Many a time Thoreau would startle us with such a terse and ironical observation as this one: "The works of the great poets have never yet been read by mankind, for only great poets can read them" (W, 115). It is no doubt a sharp reminder to the reader of the exacting

demands that a work of art stipulates for its study, but more important seems to be Thoreau's acute awareness of the greatness that a work like Walden must incorporate in itself. A topic like this could be quite dry and bookish, but Thoreau, with the choicest subject matter, forceful rhetoric, witty comparisons and analogies, and suitable examples and illustrations, presents it in a fascinating and provocative style.

The transition to the chapter on "Sounds" seems quite logical, since Thoreau maintains that the original and direct experience of listening to the various sounds in nature is a more enduring and valid medium of self-awakening than the study of books. To this effect, Thoreau posits a series of rhetorical questions:

What is a course of history or philosophy, or poetry, no matter how well selected, or the best society, or the most admirable routine of life, compared with the discipline of looking always at what is to be seen? Will you be a reader, a student merely, or a seer? Read your fate, see what is before you, and walk on into futurity. (W, 123)

The special gusto and climatic tone of these questions make the issues more emphatic and sharpened in the beginning of the chapter — indeed, they serve as whippers of the thought. As an important device and a characteristic of Thoreau's aphoristic style, the questions may be said to characterize a stage, in the process of thought, of some special instantaneous break, a sudden emphasis, or a startling turn. This inevitable discontinuity no doubt disrupts the smoothness of the narrative, but it may be noted that, for Thoreau, a continuous smoothness and homogeneity are signs of a dead, boring and unnatural style. He would prefer a style that has the variation or unevenness observed in the growth of

grass. However, Thoreau does overcome the matter of apparent discontinuity by intensity of thought and by his skilful technique of fusing the questions into the narrative. It may also be noted that the questions in Walden create a unique atmosphere of dramatic movement and mysterious dialogue.

The questions in Walden, as and when they are posed, are not let go as waste; they are immediately pressed into service, not only to focus the immediate and allied issues but also to prepare ground for fresh materials. To the questions raised earlier, Thoreau's own answer is rendered in a simple, homely and poetic description:

There were times when I could not afford to sacrifice the bloom of the present moment to any work, whether of the head or hands. I love a broad margin to my life. Sometimes, in a summer morning, having taken my accustomed bath, I sat in my sunny doorway from sunrise till noon, rapt in a revery, amidst the pines and hickories and sumachs, in undisturbed solitude and stillness, while the birds sang around or flitted noiseless through the house, until by the sun falling in at my west window, or the noise of some traveller's wagon on the distant highway, I was reminded of the lapse of time. I grew in those seasons like corn in the night, and they were far better than any work of the hands would have been. They were not time subtracted from my life, but so much over and above my usual allowance. I realized what the Orientals mean by contemplation and the forsaking of works. (W, 123-124).

Indeed, this is one of the loveliest and the most humble biographical accounts in Walden. The apparent straightforwardness and simplicity of expression of a belief and practice may appear to some as naive, artificial, sentimental, or even insincere. However, there is no such evidence to validate any of these casual impressions. The delightful simplicity and homeliness of the passage fully conform to Thoreau's fastidious demand for the need of these qualities in one's style.⁸ But

it must be emphasized that underneath this simplicity and homeliness there lies a profound and subtle spiritual longing which many readers, perhaps deluded by the naivety and directness of expression, fail to take into account. Yet, Thoreau's skill as a narrator lies in translating such a subtle experience as this into a clear and understandable language.

Whether or not Thoreau demonstrates adequate understanding of the tenets of Bhakti is perhaps beside the point, but what is more important is the fact that, as an artist, he seems to evince sincerity and earnestness in trying this system of meditation as a means of realizing unique vision and complete affinity with nature.⁹ "Instead of singing like the birds," says Thoreau in a relaxed tone of serene delight, "I silently smiled at my incessant good fortune. As the sparrow had its trill, sitting on the hickory before my door, so had I my chuckle or suppressed warble which he might hear out of my nest" (W, 124). This cannot be dismissed as an outburst of sheer sentimentality or some sort of hedonistic naturalism; the silent smile and chuckle are expressions of genuine ecstatic experience, the privacy of which Thoreau wants to share with us without any reluctance. He listens to the various sounds of the birds and animals and seeks to establish their symbolic correspondence in terms of universal experience. Amongst the more harmonious and rhythmic voices are interposed the diabolic cacophonies of the owls and the railroad engine. It is interesting to note that Thoreau dwells on these last two more intensively than on any other, perhaps to elaborate the nature of pessimism and negation that they symbolize.

Whereas the first three chapters contain philosophical expositions of Thoreau's view of life and art, as well as some preliminary facts of the Walden experience, it is the chapter on "Sounds" that gives us for the first time, indeed, an account of the actual poetic experience. But one wonders why Thoreau would prefer to start with the sounds rather than with any other aspect of his experience. No doubt, it furnishes a logical sequence and continuity to the chapter on "Reading," but more important seems to be Thoreau's belief in the esoteric occultism of sounds, some sort of verbal magic, — a direct experience with these would naturally enable him to perceive better the reality and the mystery of that of which they are the echoes. This is also true of the various sounds of the breaking of ice, movements of water and spring birds, as discussed in Chapter III.

The last phrase of the chapter on "Sounds" — "and no path to the civilized world!" — in a way, foreshadows the theme of the following chapter. The opening paragraph of "Solitude" is an excellent example of Thoreau's extravagant portrayal of nature. One would fully share Thoreau's euphoric and spiritual enchantment when he says: "This is a delicious evening, when the whole body is one sense and imbibes delight through every pore" (W, 143). The "whole body is one sense" is a state of experience that can be accomplished in solitude only. The chapter on "Solitude" is not in direct contrast to the chapter on "Sounds," as might be implied, but the former is a logical continuation of the central theme developed in the previous chapters; more particularly, it contains

Thoreau's most vigorous and persuasive plea for solitude, an atmosphere under which alone an experience of intellectual contemplation and self-awakening can be realized. As Thoreau argues paradoxically:

I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude. We are for the most part more lonely when we go abroad among men than when we stay in our chambers. A man thinking or working is always alone, let him be where he will. Solitude is not measured by the miles of space that intervene between a man and his fellows. The really diligent student in one of the crowded hives of Cambridge College is as solitary as a dervish in the desert. (W, 150)

It is not a negative argument against society as it has been misunderstood by some critics, but it is an extremely positive and eloquent assertion for the necessity of solitude. Admittedly, the argument is by no means simple, since it is a reiteration of Thoreau's teleological and epistemological belief which can be summed up as follows: that man is accountable to himself only, that man must know himself, and that man is capable of piercing through the farthest and the deepest limits of reality. For the harmony with the Supreme Reality, hence, the genuine artistic experience, as Thoreau seems to emphasize, is only made possible by knowledge and meditation, by "Jñāna, Bhakti and Karma," as commended in the Bhagavad Gita.¹⁰ Thus, the process of knowing one's self, acquiring knowledge and truth or practising meditation, can only be undertaken by the self, that is, in solitude and not in multitude.

The polemic starts with a few personal statements of specific beliefs and preferences and then follow the witty comparisons and

generalizations, a familiar method that Thoreau adopts almost consistently in similar narrations. It may however be noted that the major instrument of emphasizing and furthering the argument in this passage is paradox — all the illustrations, comparisons and generalizations right from the fourth sentence through the rest of the passage are strikingly paradoxical. It is the use of paradox in the sentence: "I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude," that lends it a uniquely startling force of persuasion; besides, the sentence also acquires a hyperbolic tone. The paradox in the sentence "Solitude is not . . . and his fellows," stresses the fact that the mere physical distance is no "measure" for determining the true state and quality of solitude — this is further reinforced by another paradoxical statement: "The really diligent . . . as solitary as a dervis in the desert"; especially the combination of paradox and simile, "as dervis in the desert," heighten the pitch of the argument. Let us consider a few more examples of the use of paradox: "I have a great deal of company in my house; especially in morning, when no body calls" (W, 151). — "Next to us is not the workman whom we have hired, with whom we love so well to talk, but the workman whose work we are" (W, 148). The last sentence also offers an example of punning on the word "workman." Expressions such as these not only provide some witty delight and a special polemical tension, but they also show Thoreau's deliberate artistry of gaining startling emphasis. Perhaps it can be contended that the frequent use of paradox in the earlier passage as well as elsewhere in Walden is tantamount to its becoming almost a

formula, a habit of constructing unusually contrasting verbal patterns, or "a trick of rhetoric . . . of substituting for the obvious word and thought its diametrical opposite."¹¹ But what is important is our recognition of the fact that whether paradox is a formula or "a trick," it furthers and strengthens the argument and that it hardly deteriorates into a "fault" of style. Moreover, paradox for Thoreau, apart from being a conscious device, a "practical strategy of persuasion,"¹² is certainly a matter connected with the artistic perception and vision, revealing the unresolved and universal differences between the real and the ideal, and between the attainable and the unattainable — though, of course, paradox is not as much naturally and directly issuing from perception as irony is. As we noted in Chapter II and here also, Thoreau would present us varying combinations of paradox with either irony or a figure of speech, or even both, but mostly with irony, thus revealing the truth.

The critical picture of the visitors to the Walden wood as presented in the chapter on "Vistors" is by itself a justification of Thoreau's preference for living in solitude. "I had withdrawn so far within the great ocean of solitude, into which the rivers of society empty," remarks Thoreau in a poetic and paradoxical manner, "that for the most part, so far as my needs were concerned, only the finest sediment was deposited around me. Beside, there were wafted to me evidences of unexplored and uncultivated continents on the other side" (W, 159). The entire expression is woven around the extended metaphor of "ocean" to which the metaphor of "rivers" stand in great contrast. Since the

rivers will naturally merge into the ocean, it is only paradoxical yet appropriate for Thoreau to perceive that the ocean-solitude is bigger and larger than the society-rivers; not only that, the former engulfs the latter, thus emphasizing the value of solitude as compared to that of society. The metaphors of "ocean" and "rivers" are further subjoined by the related metaphors of "sediments," "continents," and "side," suggesting intuitively the inner need of the self for spirituality. But it must be remembered that "the finest sediment" is "deposited" by "the rivers of the society." As Thoreau perceives in this mythopoeic manner a cosmological relationship between the society and the self and also a type of dialogical role of the rivers, it is hardly fair to say that Thoreau is anti-social. Actually, Thoreau started telling us that his "company was winnowed by [his] mere distance from the town"; but the extended metaphor of "ocean" puts more a poetic cloak on the meaning, rather than illuminating and clarifying it in a simple and plain style — in fact, the entire expression is knotted into one continuous poetic puzzle. Such images as "withdrawn," "empty," "deposited" and "wafted" create a unique dramatic movement and tension in the expression. We must also note how the combined effect of paradox and metaphor makes the argument more subtle and complicated, yet striking and emphatic.

The Canadian wood-chopper in whom the intellectual and spiritual qualities are "slumbering as in an infant" is in direct contrast to the "simple-minded pauper" whose self-confessed deficiency in intellect combined with his persistent religious humility is "a metaphysical puzzle"

to Thoreau. There is the "runaway slave" who is helped to be sent "toward the northstar." And contrasted to these "savages" are the sophisticated visitors:

Restless committed men, whose time was all taken up in getting a living or keeping it; ministers who spoke of God as if they enjoyed a monopoly of the subject, who could not bear all kinds of opinions; doctors, lawyers, uneasy housekeepers who pried into my cupboard and bed when I was out, — how came Mrs. — to know that my sheets were not as clean as hers? (W, 169)

The description is indeed witty and satirical. Not only that, one must note the rising tone of censure and ridicule, getting somewhat harsh at times, and finally culminating in a sharply posed question, which, as it combines the poignantly grotesque and censorious elements, reveals an extremely private situation. This part of the sentence with its characteristic mock-heroic vein is also somewhat humorous and relieving. It may be noted that to gain a certain peculiar effect Thoreau can weave into the narrative such a private yet trivial incident without being embarrassed or perplexed; however, in spite of its being reduced to the grotesque level, the incident as such still retains its changed character. It is a speciality of Thoreau's narrative technique that several elements, such as the serious and the grotesque, the concrete and the general, the personal and the public, are so subtly blended into the narrative that the resultant argument is sufficiently potent and plausible.

In fact, the principal argument in the chapter essentially rests on an ironical portrayal of the contrasting purposes with which people visit the woods — the woodchopper uses nature to earn his living; the

"simple-minded pauper" prefers to live with his religious ignorance and refuses to partake of nature; and the other host of "civilized" visitors, except the young boys and girls, also children, who seem to be the only hope, are infested with hypocritical attitudes. A rich variety of well-drawn and specific comparisons, rendered in somewhat more relaxed, witty and ironical style than that of the previous chapters, make the narrative stand a little distinct, particularly from those of the immediately preceding and following chapters.

The chapter on "The Bean-Field" is a curious mixture of the actual experience of growing beans, the meandering generalizations and poetic descriptions. At the literal level, the chapter with all its factual details and statistics is linked with the chapter on "Economy," while at another level the experience of planting the beans — the seeds, birth, growth and other processes -- is a metaphor. Let us consider the following simple and straightforward statement:

It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over and selling them, — the last was the hardest of all, — I might add eating, for I did taste. I was determined to know beans.
(W, 178)

But the meaning becomes more complex as we read the following ironical, witty and allusive piece:

Not that I wanted beans to eat, for I am by nature a Pythagorean, so far as beans are concerned, whether they mean porridge or voting, and exchanged them for rice; but, perchance, as some must work in fields if only for the sake of tropes and expression, to serve a parable-maker one day. It was on the whole a rare amusement, which, continued too long, might have become a dissipation. (W, 179)

Not that Thoreau is facetious or artificial, but he possesses such an artistic skill of using facts at different levels that we can see the same fact utilized repeatedly without any strains of overuse and boredom. In the following passage, the entire experience of growing beans is utilized as a basis for contrast between the bean-seed and the virtue-seed and between the external growth and the inner growth — reaffirming the truth of experience at the symbolic level:

This further experience also I gained. I said to myself, I will not plant beans and corn with so much industry another summer, but such seeds, if the seed is not lost, as sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, innocence, and the like, and see if they will not grow in this soil, even with less toil and manurance, and sustain me, for surely it has not been exhausted for these crops. Alas! I said this to myself; but now another summer is gone, and another, and another, and I am obliged to say to you, Reader, that the seeds which I planted, if indeed they were the seeds of those virtues, were wormeaten or had lost their vitality, and so did not come up. (W, 181)

Using the dialogical rhetoric of arguing with his self, Thoreau succeeds in reminding the reader of the importance of the quality of seeds and soil, and of time and industry for cultivating inner virtues.

The chapter concludes with an excellent allegorical, rather symbolical passage, emphasizing the cosmological unity and eternal virtues in the self:

What though I value the seed of these beans, and harvest that in the fall of the year? This broad field which I have looked at so long looks not to me as the principal cultivator, but away from me to influences more genial to it, which water and make it green. These beans have results which are not harvested by me. Do they not grow for woodchucks partly? The ear of wheat (in Latin spica, obsoletely speca, from spe, hope) should not be the only hope of the husbandman; its kernel or grain (granum, from gerendo, bearing)

is not all that it bears. How, then, can our harvest fail? Shall I not rejoice also at the abundance of the weeds whose seeds are the granary of the birds? It matters little comparatively whether the fields fill the farmer's barns. The true husbandman will cease from anxiety, as the squirrels manifest no concern whether the woods will bear chestnuts this year or not, and finish his labor with every day, relinquishing all claim to the produce of his fields, and sacrificing in his mind not only his first but his last fruits also. (W, 183-184)

The nature of the argument, expressing a profoundly philosophical thought, is extremely intricate and baffling. The first few sentences bring out direct and sincere recognition of the "influences more genial" as being responsible for the entire growth. The interrogative sentence following these gives a sudden twist to the argument, affirming that the woodchuck also partakes the natural produce as well as do the human beings. But the argument becomes more knotted as Thoreau introduces the Latinized etymological analogy of the wheat plant. It may apparently be paradoxical and puzzling to suggest that though the Latin equivalents for "the ear of wheat" and "its kernel" suggest respectively "hope" and "bearing," "the true husbandman" is exhorted to look beyond these illusory aspects — to something more enduring and universal, to the more permanent springs of "hope" and "bearing," rather than to the temporary and periodical sources and fruit. The argument gets more climactic as Thoreau tells rather quizically that he rejoices equally at the growth of "the weeds" which feed the birds. The complete resolution is provided in the last sentence which, though it may appear as a simple summation, is certainly a very delicate exposition of a subtle thought. Thoreau wants "the true husbandman" to renounce "all claims to the produce" and to sacrifice "in

his mind not only his first but his last fruits also," and conduct himself like the joyful and blissful squirrel. It is, as perhaps might be misunderstood by some, by no means a call to primitivism, a life of listlessness and lethargy, or escapism; for we must note the emphasis on the expressions "finish his labor with every day" and "sacrificing in his mind." The sacrifice or renunciation is, thus, a voluntary condition of the mind, an inner attitude of the self. The genesis of this deep thought is certainly spiritual in nature and can presumably be traced back to the following lines in the Bhagavad Gita:

But great is the man who, free from attachments, and with a mind ruling its powers in harmony, works on the path of Karma Yoga, the path of consecrated action. . . . The world is in the bonds of action, unless the action is consecration. Let thy actions then be pure, free from the bonds of desire.¹³

Hence, the last sentence is the key, not only to the comparatively less appreciated chapter on "The Bean-Field" but to the entire philosophy of work and living as expressed in the earlier chapters of Walden; more particularly, it touches directly on the central theme of the chapter on "Economy."

Let us note Thoreau's skill in the use of the etymological analogy of the wheat plant. Though the parentheses suggest that the analogy has been introduced rather playfully, yet, as we have seen above, it cloaks the meaning in a subtle and puissant allegory. The vital meaning of growth perceived in the wheat plant are analogously traced to the Latin roots of "spica" and "granum"; the verbal analogy as such serves a double purpose, first, to verify the real and true meaning, and, second, to

emphasize the meaning thus verified. This etymological analogy and quite a few others in Walden (as for example, the analogy of "leaf" in "Spring")¹⁴ illustrate Thoreau's vivid perception of the natural facts and phenomena and their skilful use in stressing the cosmological unity and oneness of all creation.

The chapter on "The Village" is extremely anecdotal, yet Thoreau finds an occasion to record some of the most trenchant and sarcastic philosophical reflections on the nature of society, symbolized by the village. The direct and ironical contrast between his own life and that of villagers, and between the government of nature at Walden and that of the village, make the narrative cohesive, terse and witty.

The entire chapter on "The Ponds" is one luxuriant poetic interlude, describing Thoreau's experience of observing several ponds. Following the exit from "The Village," "The Ponds" marks re-entry into nature. Once again we witness this dynamism and dramaticism created by the repetitive movements of exit and entrance, first, among the various chapters and, then within each individual chapter. For the first time, we learn about the exhilarating beauty and the poetic significance of the Walden Pond, its shape, design, water, depth and atmospheric setting. It is from hereon that the reader, after having acquired a comprehensive background, is ready to peep into the heart of Thoreau's experience — the central symbol of the Walden Pond. The chapter, therefore, marks a dramatic turn in the narrative technique of the following chapters, excepting those of "Baker Farm," "Higher Laws," and "Brute Neighbours."

John Field's portrait in "Baker Farm" reechoes the theme of the chapter on "Economy." The irony is that the Irishman, living in the heart of the woods, has wasted his life "bogging" in order to provide for groceries, whereas Thoreau by renouncing those needs is able to establish an intimate relationship with nature. In a way, it is a direct contrast between the ideal and the ludicrous; at the same time, with all the itchy undertones and overtones toward the issue of Irish poverty, Thoreau uses the John Field episode as a springboard to poetizing his ramblings (see the discussion of the introductory poetic passage of "Baker Farm," Chapter II, 42), or even more perhaps to paving a ground for the subtle and baffling thought of "Higher Laws." Employing the most eloquent and witty dialectic, Thoreau seeks to develop a forceful plea for a life of intellectual and spiritual fulfilment rather than of instinctive and sensual indulgence. The series of direct and heightened contrasts between the negative and positive aspects of living, as for example, between sensuality, animality and passionate indulgence on the one hand, and disciplined restraint, purity and chastity on the other, make an analytical and challenging reading in ethics. The argument for and against vegetarian and non-vegetarian food is subjective and it does seem to drift toward sentimentality, particularly when Thoreau shows his anxiety to substantiate and validate it by such quotations as from Kirby and Spence. However, the central concern seems to be an allegorical one — to aspire for poetic imagination which, according to Thoreau, essentially owes its existence and development to the moral, ethical and

spiritual core of life. Thoreau's uncompromising ethic-aesthetic thesis can be stated like this: the best and the most genuine art grows out of the purest and the most chaste generative power of the self; therefore, the animal appetites in the self must be subordinated to the demands of the intellect and soul. With the "bardic rage"¹⁵ at his command, Thoreau rightfully asserts that "our whole life is startlingly moral" (W, 241) — and so is all art that grows out of it. As Thoreau maintains that morality is basically ingrained in art, there is therefore no place for any external effort to import didacticism. One important characteristic of Thoreau's rhetoric seems to be to completely nullify the negative, by using multiple techniques of forceful and persuasive rhetoric, by reducing it to the level of the ludicrous, and by combining the grotesque and the ironical. In his condemnation of eating flesh, he even makes a pungent appeal to one's senses to create some sort of repulsion and disgust.

The chapter on "Brute Neighbours" has been described as "the comic interlude . . . a descent from the level of 'Higher Laws.'"¹⁶ The rest of the chapters follow the archetypal romantic-mythic theme of rebirth;¹⁷ more especially, the structure of these, as Matthiessen observes, "becomes cyclical, his [Thoreau's] poems of the seasons or myth of the year."¹⁸ (See Chapter III on "Imagery and Symbolism")

The "Conclusion" contains not only the brisk and brilliantly condensed summation of the principal themes of Thoreau's argument in Walden but also the allegories of the more central ones. However, it

must be emphasized that, though the chapter is titled as "Conclusion," it has its own inner development and movement. The chapter opens with an extremely vigorous and rhetorical argument, reminding man of the uselessness and futility of his efforts to spend his lifetime wandering on the globe in quest for an inspiration or light in the externalities. With the help of witty and ironical allusions and illustrations, drawn mostly from history, Thoreau reminds us that the springs of real inspiration lie within and not without. The most arduous and challenging yet the most urgent and worthwhile path, we are told, is the one that explores "the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being alone" (W, 354). This metaphor, rather symbol of "the private sea" or "Ocean," in a way, links the suggestion directly with Walden Pond. The chapter as such contains no direct reference to Walden Pond itself, except that the Pond is now transfigured as "the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean." Punctuated by series of allegories (as for example, "I left the woods . . ." and "I do not suppose . . ." — W, 355, 358), the argument for the purposeful and spiritual living continues with renewed gusto, until we are brought to an extremely ironical and satirical part of the narrative about the self-deluded and conceited "good Adam contemplating his own virtue" (W, 365). The concern for the salvation of "the good Adam," the powerful suggestion contained in the symbolic expression "the private sea . . . of one's being alone," and the recurring emphasis on the need of truth, beauty and purity sum up the underlying idea of the Walden experience. Truth, beauty and purity are subtle metaphors of experience, emerging out of a

highly subjective and personal experience, a life of full and complete dedication to the realization of a singularly and uniquely superb condition of "intelligibility," which is "emblematic" of eternal creation. In this regard, there seems to be a valid basis for such an assertion that "the good Adam" must first shed his mask, perhaps, by the ritual of the "busk" (as suggested in the chapter on "Economy," W, 75), and then explore possibilities for the enlightenment of the self.¹⁹ But it must be clearly understood that Thoreau's ideal is not the childish and primitive "Adam." We see quite clearly all the centripetal and centrifugal forces of experience merging into the central symbol of "the private sea," or Walden Pond for that matter. Also, we note in the narrative a peculiarly dramatic phenomenon of the constantly diffused amalgam of the "I" and the other self.

The urge for eternal perfection is best expressed in the allegory of "an artist in the city of Kouroo" (W, 359). The concrete symbol of the "staff" and allusions to "Brahma," "Kalpa" and the legendary "city of Kouroo" (alluding perhaps to ancient dynasty of the Kuroos in the Mahabhart) are woven into an exquisite myth, which gives much greater and deeper meaning to Thoreau's quest and realization. Towards the end of the chapter, the narrative becomes at once poetic. The argument about the mystery of existence and creation is elaborated and sustained by the brilliant juxtaposition of the mythic contrast of life with "the water in river," and the meaning of process of being, as well as of "immortality and resurrection" as read into the fable of the "beautiful bug." And,

finally, the chapter concludes with a poetic note of optimism and profound wisdom: "The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star" (W, 367).

We may specially note the nature of and quality of Thoreau's wit and humour as contributing to the movement of the narrative and the effectiveness of the argument. It has been shown earlier in our discussion in this and the other chapters how Thoreau's shooting and sparkling wit stems from sharp irony, subtle and intellectual polemic, rhetorical manipulation, punning, paradox, juxtaposition of the grotesque with the sublime and several other devices. As for humour, it is more genuine and spiritual a laughter of fulfilment and harmony than a mere expression of some absurd lightheartedness. Thoreau's geniality is mostly dominated by the intellectual and the intuitive. Let us consider the following examples:

(1) "The wild goose is more of a cosmopolite than we; he breaks his fast in Canada, takes a luncheon in Ohio, and plumes himself for the night in a southern bayou" (W, 352). (2) "The universe is wider than our views of it" (W, 352). (3) "What does Africa, — what does the West stand for? Is not our own interior white on the chart? black though it may prove, like the coat, when discovered" (W, 353). (4) "Neither men nor toadstools grow so" (W, 356). (5) "The government of the world I live in was not framed, like that of Britain, in after-dinner conversations over the wine" (W, 366).

Most of these sentences are witty and epigrammatic. It seems to be a peculiar quality of wit that it vivifies and enhances the effect of a basic rhetorical device, such as irony or paradox, thus making the sentence stand somewhat more distinct from the rest of the narrative.

Also, as we may note, the witty quality of the sentences spurs the narrative. In the following lines, for example:

Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society. (W, 361)

the pace of the narrative is much quicker and the argument more direct and exhortative. All the sentences are markedly short; they are witty, epigrammatic and paradoxical. As the nature of Thoreau's argument becomes more incisive, direct and terse, his wit also seems to sparkle more. The narrative of Walden is extremely witty; and examples are not lacking to demonstrate that Thoreau's wit does not get caustic, cynical or sardonic as it does with Swift. The quality of wit in Walden, issuing directly from Thoreau's transcendental temperament and thought cannot be negative and pessimistic; it must ultimately strike the chords of hope and appreciation, of cosmological unity and oneness.

Hence, it must be clear from the foregoing discussion that the narrative has a unique progression and development in its movement, corresponding to the thought and experience; as the pattern of poetic experience is centripetal-centrifugal, so is the total movement of the narrative. The nature of dramaticism and dynamism, characterized by mysterious and subtle patterns of exit and entrance, and the phenomena of rise and fall and emergence and growth, is sincere, tense and lucid. Each chapter has an inner movement of its own, which readily and automatically lends itself into the following; this unity and continuity of

movement is, indeed, indicative of some inner central force of "shaping" in Walden, and, hence of its "organic form."²⁰ Besides, the narrative in Walden is deliberately rhetorical. There is hardly a rhetorical device that Thoreau does not employ, not as much to clarify as to weave an extremely baffling argument. His sparkling and shooting wit, brilliant paradoxes, potent ironies, clever punning, — all aid in making the narrative more emphatic and revealing. No doubt, Thoreau's knowledge of the classics gives him an advantage of tossing in an allusion whenever it is warranted, but repeatedly he returns to the concrete and specific elements in his own experience to substantiate and validate his observations about the nature of reality which he is seeking so vigorously. The philosophical and allegorical qualities of the narrative reaffirm the universality and timelessness of the vision it expresses. Hence, the extremely polemical and symbolical narrative that expresses this vision is rather pertinent to our study of style in Walden.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

It can be probably said that Thoreau's style not only emerges from his profound and unique vision of life and universe, but it also stimulates the thought. In the case of an organic form like that of Walden, there is a continuing interaction between the form and thought, the "shaping" and "development" are inner and extremely subjective, and the expression is the embodiment of the total experience. Though the matter and form in this case are deemed as inseparable, the latter has a definite role, and as such must be separated for the purpose of literary analysis. Only then, can we study the nature and quality of the artistic process that gives expression to such a profound and subtle vision as that of Walden. As the writer strives to gain "the widest possible intelligibility,"¹ and the appreciation of such values as truth, beauty and purity, he also simultaneously tries to organize and develop his artistic powers to be able to execute this state of realization and experience. Thoreau spells out this phenomenon as being one's complete saturation with the experience of truth and reality, which is essentially based on sense-perception, contemplation and intuition. However, this experience, at least from the standpoint of a work of art, becomes only relevant if adequate expressive ability is developed. It has been shown how Thoreau sets such enviable and fastidious standard of style in achieving an eternal quality of perfection. The recurring references to the highly

exacting qualities of expression in Walden, A Week, the Journal and the letters indicate the extent of Thoreau's interest in and concern for style. But the most significant and striking evidence of such a passionate concern for style, both in theory and practice, is the text of Walden itself. A more specific yet comprehensive elucidation of Thoreau's vision of a work of art and its execution is brilliantly expressed in the allegory of artist of Kouroo in the chapter on "Conclusion" (W, 359-360), where Thoreau, in a powerful urge for "perfection" of the "staff," evokes such powerful images and symbols of eternal creation as "Brahma" (the chief deity in the Hindu Trilogy responsible for creation) and "Kalpa" (the period between creation and dissolution of the world). The artist, as Thoreau envisions, pursues his work vigorously through the timelessness of the "Kalpa" and with an unparalleled devotion and dedication, so as to achieve a singularly superb level of excellence, an eternal quality in a work of art, which makes it as "the fairest of all creations of Brahma,"² and "with full and fair proportions."³ The finished quality of the "staff," that is, its fairness and proportion, in a way, is an appreciation of the vision as well as style. But it is the style, the manner and process which make that roughly hewn material into a divine principle. Such images as "peel the stick,"⁴ "smoothed and polished," "finishing stroke," and "the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet," bear the truth of the foregoing observation. More particularly, they emphasize that a work of art essentially calls for an arduous and timeless process as well as effort

before it reaches the stage of completion and final "shaping." Thoreau's emphasis on timelessness as operative in a work of art: "in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter,"⁵ may be rightly compared to Blake's idea on the subject: "The ruins of Time build mansions in Eternity."⁶ Indeed, there is a befitting analogy between the "staff" and Walden; both are timeless works of art, possessing the eternal equality of intelligibility.

Hence, the style is not only an expression of one's vision, it is a shaping and moulding force also. In considering style in Walden, the approach has been organic and integral, rather than historical and biographical, involving a detailed study of words and sentences, imagery and symbolism, and narrative and the argument.

"One inconvenience I sometimes experienced in so small a house," remarks Thoreau in a witty and humorous style, "the difficulty of getting to a sufficient distance from my guest when we began to utter the big thoughts in big words. You want room for your thoughts to get into sailing trim and run a course or two before they make their port. The bullet of your thought," continues Thoreau in a mocking vein, "must have overcome its lateral and ricochet motion and fallen . . . Also, our sentences wanted room to unfold and form their columns in the interval" (W, 156). We must note here Thoreau's strong dislike for big, barren, lifeless, inflated and deflated words. The words in Walden are forceful and vital, comprehensive and rich in their powerful thought. Expressive as they are of an intensely subjective and spiritual experience, words

in Walden are, indeed, "fateful," "oracular" and "moving."⁷ Since the roots of experience lie in the physical nature, a special quality of words is that they are characterized by precision, specificity and concreteness. Much of the vocabulary is no doubt homely and non-technical, but at times it tends to be difficult and subtle. Also, the influence of the Greek, Roman and Oriental classics is pertinent in accounting for a fair sprinkling of words from these. The skilful use of these words shows that they are assimilated in Thoreau's thought. It is rather naive to suggest that in the choice of such words Thoreau is being pedantic. In the choice and arrangement of words, Thoreau exhibits a special taste, which is basically influenced by his vision and rhetoric. The arrangement of words in different patterns, such as repetition (including repetition of a word in its various inflected forms) and association by sound and meaning, creates a peculiar imagistic effect on the reader. We must also note Thoreau's use of words at different levels, particularly the same word being used at the simple, metaphorical and symbolic levels. The choicest diction is one of the commendable excellences of style in Walden.

Regarding Thoreau's sentences, Walden is full of both extremely small and unusually long and serpentine sentences. Again here too, Thoreau demonstrates the masterly skill of "economy" and "simplicity" in the choice and arrangement of words — one hardly finds a superfluous and redundant word in a sentence. The short sentences are mostly witty and epigrammatic; also, they are terse, sharp and incisive. The longer

sentences are extremely lyrical, poetic and tense, and are not at all windy and inflated. The mixture of the short and the long sentences lends an interesting variety and dramatic movement to the prose of Walden. Thoreau's love for and mastery of "kinked" and "knotted" sentences is clearly evident from the large body of such expressions in Walden. These sentences are richly pregnant with subtle and tangible meanings, but they do not admit any rapid and superficial reading; one must pause for a while to untie all the knots and to follow the uneven movement. Most of these sentences meet Thoreau's own expectations of "concentrated," "nutty" and "stuttering" expressions.⁸ There is hardly a rhetorical device that Thoreau does not employ to make his sentences powerful and effective in suggestiveness and appeal. Comparison and contrast, analogy, thesis and anti-thesis, paradox, punning and irony are some of Thoreau's basic and most frequently employed devices. The sentences in Walden are well-knit, compact and unified structures, emitting reserved flashes of deep and subtle thought.

As the level of experience in Walden gets more profound and intense, the style also becomes "emblematic."⁹ Since a substantial part of the expression in Walden is "emblematic,"⁹ or symbolic and poetic, it is necessary to study the symbolic and transfigurative process and its bearing on the total meaning. All the metaphors of experience, such as "simplicity," "economy," "reading," "solitude," and, above all, the very act of living in the Walden shanty, including the resulting imagery, strongly direct themselves towards and ultimately merge into the central

symbol of the Walden Pond. Not only that, all the symbols lead themselves into this central symbol of the self, the Atman,¹⁰ "the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being alone" (W, 354). Indeed, the nature of relationship is controlled by the centripetal-centrifugal movement. For a proper understanding of the meaning of the Walden experience, one must have a full grasp of the suggestiveness of the central symbol and its intrinsic relationship with the other symbols. The metaphors, symbols and images express a profoundly subjective experience of self-realization, the state that Emerson describes as "original relation to the universe."¹¹ Besides, the imagery of nature, of analogous inner correspondence and verification, and of creation, growth and dissolution is in consonance with the total theme of regeneration. It may be noted that the imagery in Walden is extremely vivid, sensuous and delightful; we must admire Thoreau's artistic ability in absorbing a scene from nature into his cosmological perception and in rendering it cinematographically with live, concrete and translucent images of touch, sight, movement and sound.

An important characteristic of style in Walden is its extravagance, a predominant tendency in Thoreau's transcendental perception and vision of cosmic unity and oneness, which enables him to poetize truth and reality. Another notable feature of style is Thoreau's unique treatment of facts at several levels. The natural and other facts, perceived by a living experience, are rendered into "allegories of truth" and subtle myths — the historical, the natural and the personal are frequently

blended into the mythic. Thoreau seems to be following this romantic-mythic style quite consistently through the pages of Walden.

The total argument in Walden, starting from "Economy" and culminating in "Conclusion," is one continuous and vigorous plea for the renewal and regeneration of the self. No doubt, the basis of this thought, as Thoreau himself seems to suggest, lie in the "cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagvat-Geeta" (W, 328), or in any other source, but what is more important to note is the fact that the philosophical thought is personalized. The narrative is varied, sometimes it is distinctly descriptive, sometimes symbolic and poetic, while at other times it is highly argumentative. Each one of these types admits various levels of interpretation, from factual to complex and to esoteric ones. Employing an extremely intellectual and rhetorical method of development, Thoreau makes the polemic intricate and baffling. He loves difficulty and esotericism, and for common sense and dull perception, he has no sympathy. Not that the thought is impenetrable or obscure, but it is intellectually challenging and provocative. It is therefore somewhat misleading to suggest that Walden is "written very simply for the inexperienced, offering facts and figures, and setting forth some of the immediate advantages of the life it advertises,"¹² or that "the less immediately practical chapters are written on an elementary textbook level."¹³ Such an interpretation of Walden perhaps results from reading it at the illusory or literal level. No doubt, there are plenty of biographical details, in fact, Walden is completely auto-biographical, but it must be

remembered that the biographical and experiential information, including the statistical data, are metaphors of experience.

The relatively more direct and descriptive narrative provides some relief from the intensity of the polemic. To gain a special emphasis and effect, Thoreau uses Hegelian dialectics and other rhetorical devices as mentioned earlier. The two more frequently used rhetorical devices are irony and paradox; the latter sometimes appears to become a formula. The dramatic changes in the narrative from the personal and anecdotal to the descriptive, from the descriptive to the discursive, and to the poetic, gives a special movement to the narrative. Also, the narrative in Walden registers inner pace and movement, varied and diffused, yet consistently and coherently forging its way towards a clear progression. From the point of view of structure even, it has been shown that one central argument runs through the pages of Walden. However, the beauty lies in the thematic and psychological treatment of the subject matter, particularly in its presentation. The arrangement and organization of the chapters facilitate the flow of thought. Sometimes, the transition from the relatively more serious chapter to the seemingly less serious one may lead one to underrate the importance of that particular chapter, as, for example, is the case with the most commonly misunderstood chapter on "The Bean-Field." It has been shown earlier how the subtle and symbolic thought of this chapter is related to the core of meaning in Walden. Structurally, each of the eighteen chapters, apart from having

a unity and coherence of its own, is a vital and indispensable link in the chain.

So far as style in Walden is philosophical, witty, epigrammatic, it belongs to the metaphysical tradition of the seventeenth century; but so far as it transcends the philosophical and becomes personalized and poetic, it belongs to the romantic-transcendental tradition. Style in Walden is organic, personal and subjective. That Thoreau demonstrates mythic consciousness and that the style of Walden evolves out of this has been made clear. Whether it is a myth of the seasons, of the entire nature scaled into the Walden Pond, or of life with its dissolution and resurgence — whatever mythic pattern we may accept, style in Walden can be described as romantic-mythic. It is a prophetic style that expresses a unique and profound vision of hope and salvation, a blissful and ecstatic song of the self, sung more gloriously and profusely, more definitively and positively than Whitman's "Song of Myself." As with the rebirth of Walden Pond, the self gains cosmic consciousness, glory and vision, the hero-bard rejuvenates in orphic enchantment. As the vision fructifies, the artist rather enviously challenges the creation of Brahma, not out of pride but out of appreciation and inspiration.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," Nature, Addresses, and Lectures, Vol. 1: Emerson's Complete Works, 9.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 77.

⁴J, II, 413.

⁵Ibid., 190.

⁶Emerson, "Nature," op. cit., 56.

⁷J, II, 468.

⁸Odell Shepard, ed., The Heart of Thoreau's Journals, 253.

⁹Ibid., 329.

¹⁰J, II, 191.

¹¹William Blake in a letter to the Revd. Trusler, The Portable Blake, 179.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Albert Hofstadter, "Art as an Expression of Subjectivity," Truth and Art.

¹⁴Northrop Frye, The Well-Tempered Critic, 116. Note: Even this process cannot be objective, as any objective order, particularly of the type referred to here, expresses a certain degree of subjectivity.

¹⁵Thomas De Quincey, "Style," Representative Essays on the Theory of Style, 146.

¹⁶George Henry Lewes, "The Principle of Beauty," Representative Essays on the Theory of Style, 217.

¹⁷Quoted by Walter Pater, "Style," Appreciations, 36-37.

¹⁸Henry Focillon cited by Hofstadter, op. cit., 202.

¹⁹Hofstadter's own explanation, ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹J. Middleton Murry, The Problem of Style, 3.

²²Edmund Gosse, "Style," Encyclopaedia Britannica, XXI, 489.

²³J, III, 86.

²⁴Ibid., 85-86.

²⁵Cassius Longinus, On the Sublime, 15.

²⁶Ibid., 37.

²⁷Herbert Read, English Prose Style, 215.

²⁸Pater, op. cit., 38.

²⁹See Pater, "Style," op. cit.

³⁰Lewes, op. cit., 209.

³¹Read, op. cit., 216.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., 215.

³⁵Ibid., 216.

³⁶De Quincey, op. cit., 147.

³⁷Cited by Gosse, op. cit.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Murray, op. cit., Chapter I.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Pater, op. cit.

⁴⁴De Quincey, op. cit., 64.

⁴⁵Emerson, op. cit., "Nature," 31. In the essay on "Nature," Emerson elucidates his theory of language in relation to nature: "Nature is the vehicle of thought, and in a simple, double, and threefold degree.

1. Words are signs of natural facts.

2. Particular natural facts are symbols of particular spiritual facts.

3. Nature is the symbol of spirit.

1. Words are signs of natural facts. The use of natural history is to give us aid in supernatural history: the use of the outer creation, to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation. Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance" (31).

⁴⁶Frye, op. cit., 89.

⁴⁷F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance, 38.

⁴⁸De Quincey, op. cit., 44.

⁴⁹For example, Brownell in his essay on "Emerson" (American Prose Masters) complains of discontinuity and lack of elementary principles of logic. He is also critical of his sentences. Let us look at the following observation: "What his style lacks is art in the general sense. It is distinctly the style of a writer who is artistic, but not an artist — He had no sense of composition; his compositions are not composed. They do not constitute objective creations. They have no construction, no organic quality — no evolution. He is above the "degradation" of resort to the elementary, but in some guise or other fundamental, machinery of rhetorical presentation — the succession of exordium, theme, conclusion" (126). See also comments about Emerson's prose in Herbert Read, op. cit., and Gorham Munson's, Style and Form in American Prose.

⁵⁰Emerson, op. cit., 29-30.

⁵¹Ezra Pound quoted in Matthiessen, op. cit., 579-580.

⁵²Henry James cited by Matthiessen, op. cit., 582.

⁵³Leaves of Grass and Selected Prose, 457.

⁵⁴Brownell, "Hawthorne," op. cit., 89.

⁵⁵Matthiessen, op. cit., 80.

⁵⁶J, XII, 344.

⁵⁷Shepard, op. cit., 38.

⁵⁸Ibid., 34.

⁵⁹J, XIII, 11.

⁶⁰Cf. earlier discussion in this chapter on personal and subjective style.

⁶¹See J. Lyndon Shanley, The Making of Walden.

⁶²Shepard, op. cit., 299-300.

⁶³Eliot cited by Matthiessen, op. cit., 157.

⁶⁴Robert Louis Stevenson, "Henry David Thoreau: His Character and Opinions," Familiar Studies of Men & Books.

⁶⁵Henry David Thoreau, "Thomas Carlyle and His Works," Cape Cod and Miscellanies, Vol IV: The Writings of Henry David Thoreau (Hereafter to be referred to as The Writings), 342.

⁶⁶Stevenson, op. cit., 67.

⁶⁷Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Thoreau," Lectures and Biographical Sketches, Vol. X: Emerson's Complete Works, 447.

⁶⁸Thoreau on Carlyle, op. cit., 353.

⁶⁹Thoreau's note in the Journal (1851) reads: "My faults are: —
Paradoxes, — saying just the opposite, — a
style which may be imitated.
Ingenious.
Using current phrases and maxims, when I should
speak for myself.
Want of conciseness."

Cited by Mark Van Doren, Henry David Thoreau: A Critical Study, 80.

⁷⁰Emerson, "Thoreau," op. cit., 446.

⁷¹Thoreau on Carlyle, op. cit.

⁷²J, II, 418-419.

⁷³The Works, I, 365.

⁷⁴Stevenson, op. cit., 134.

⁷⁵Sherman Paul, The Shores of America: Thoreau's Inward Exploration, 189-190.

⁷⁶Ibid., 190.

⁷⁷Ibid., 293.

⁷⁸Frye, op. cit., 117.

⁷⁹Joseph Wood Krutch, Henry David Thoreau, 287. Refer to the chapter on "The Style and the Man," 249-287.

⁸⁰Ibid., 118 and 119.

⁸¹Ibid., 119-120.

⁸²Van Doren, op. cit., 70.

⁸³Ibid., 81-82.

Chapter II

1

Walt Whitman cited in C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, The Meaning of Meaning, 32.

2

See Chapter I, footnote 45, for the relevant quotation from Emerson's theory of language.

3

See discussion on Whitman in F. O. Matthiessen, American Renaissance.

4

Shepard, ed., The Heart of Thoreau's Journals, 143.

5

A Week, 106.

6

See Thoreau's views on the subject, Chapter I, 8.

7

J, II, 480.

8

Shepard, op. cit., 294.

⁹For the purpose of this study the Manuscript edition of Walden (Walden, Vol. II: The Complete Works of Henry David Thoreau) has been used. All textual references from Walden are hereafter denoted by W.

¹⁰W, 357. Also see Chapter I, 19.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Mark Van Doren, Henry David Thoreau: A Critical Study, 67.

¹⁴Thoreau, "Thomas Carlyle and His Works," The Writings, IV, 324.

¹⁵A Week, 106.

¹⁶Ibid., 107.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸William Ellery Channing, Thoreau: The Poet-Naturalist, 31.

¹⁹A Week, op. cit., 106.

²⁰J, II, 418-419.

²¹A Week, op. cit., 107.

²²Ibid.

²³Thoreau cited in Matthiessen, op. cit., 85.

²⁴Herbert Read in his English Prose Style observes: "The danger with all long and complex sentences is that they may lack balance. The sense may be logically clear, the rhythm may be easy, but still they try our patience or offend our sensibilities. There is a want of proportion between the subject and the predicate, or between either of these and the verb—not so much a proportion of sense, which would result in humour, but a proportion of structure, the simple against the complicated, the devious against the direct" (46).

²⁵ Ibid., Read notes the flat and jerky nature of Swift's following long sentence: "Last year a paper was brought here from England, called a Dialogue between the Archbishop of Canterbury and Mr. Higgins, which we ordered to be burnt by the common hangman, as it well deserved, though we have no more to do with his Grace of Canterbury, than you have with the Archbishop of Dublin, whom you suffer to be abused openly, and by name, by that paltry rascal of an observator; and lately upon an affair, wherein he had no concern; I mean, the business of the missionary of Drogheda, wherein our excellent primate was engaged, and did nothing but according to law and discretion" (46).

²⁶ J, III, 85. "A fact truly and absolutely stated," says Thoreau, "is taken out of the region of common sense and acquires a mythologic or universal significance."

²⁷ Following is an example (also noted by Walter Harding, "Five Ways of Looking at Walden," Thoreau in Our Season, 45-46.) of quite a long but compact and unified sentence in Walden: "I sometimes dream of a larger and more populous house, standing in a golden age, of enduring materials, and without gingerbread work, which shall still consist of only one room, a vast, rude, substantial, primitive hall, without ceiling or plastering, with bare rafters and purlins supporting a sort of lower heaven over one's head, — useful to keep off rain and snow; where the king and queen posts stand out to receive your homage, when you have done reverence to the prostrate Saturn of an older dynasty on stepping over the sill; a cavernous house, wherein you must reach up a torch upon a pole to see the roof; where some may live in the fire-place, some in the recess of a window, and some on settles, some at one end of the hall, some at another, and some aloft on rafters with the spiders, if they choose; a house which you have got into when you have the outside door, and the ceremony is over; where the weary traveller may wash, and eat, and converse, and sleep, without further journey; such a shelter as you would be glad to reach in a tempestuous night, containing all the essentials of a house, and nothing for house-keeping; where you can see all the treasures of the house at one view, and everything hangs upon its peg that a man should use; at once kitchen, pantry, parlor, chamber, storehouse, and garret; where you can see so necessary a thing as a barrel or a ladder, so convenient a thing as a cupboard, and hear the pot boil, and pay your respects to the fire that cooks your dinner and the oven that bakes your bread, and the necessary furniture and utensils are the chief ornaments; where the washing is not put out, nor the fire, nor the mistress, and perhaps you are sometimes requested to move from off the trap-door, when the cook would descend into the cellar, and so learn whether the ground is solid or hollow beneath you without stamping" (W, 268-269).

²⁸See Read cited in footnote 24.

²⁹A Week, 110.

Chapter III

¹Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," Nature, Addresses, and Lectures, Vol. I: Emerson's Complete Works, 36.

²See Chapter I, footnote 45 for the three levels of communication with nature.

³Emerson, op. cit., 38.

⁴Joseph J. Moldenhauer, "Images of Circularity in Thoreau's Prose," Texas Studies in Literature and Language, I (1959-60), 245-263.

⁵W, 215. Note: The metaphor "God's Drop" was suggested by Emerson.

⁶Mark Van Doren, Henry David Thoreau: A Critical Study, 81.

⁷Melvin E. Lyon, "Walden Pond as a Symbol," PMLA, LXXXII, Number 2 (May, 1967), 289-300. Note: See Lyon's observation on p. 298.

⁸Ibid.

⁹The Song of God: Bhagavad-Gita, translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, 67.

¹⁰W, 346. Thoreau observes: "As every season seems best to us in its turn, so the coming in of spring is like the creation of Cosmos out of Chaos and the realization of the Golden Age."

¹¹Ibid., 340.

¹²J.E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, 301-302. Note: The following quotations on the symbol of sulphur are from René Alleau's elucidation as contained in this book.

¹³Ibid., 185.

¹⁴Van Doren, op. cit., 17. Also see pages 16-19.

¹⁵Edith Peairs, "The Hound, the Bay Horse, and the Turtle-Dove: A Study of Thoreau and Voltaire," PMLA, LII (1937), 863-869.

¹⁶Frank Davidson, "Thoreau's Hound, Bay Horse, and Turtle-Dove," The New England Quarterly, XXVII (1954), 524.

¹⁷Henry Seidal Canby, Thoreau, 294.

Chapter IV

¹Henry Focillon cited by Albert Hofstadter, Truth and Art, 202. Also refer to Chapter I, 7 of the thesis.

²Refer to Thoreau's own statement about the "Great Prose," cited in Chapter I, 20 of the thesis.

³Robert Louis Stevenson, "Henry David Thoreau: His Character and Opinions," Familiar Studies of Men & Books, 137.

⁴William Blake in a letter to Thomas Butts, The Portable Blake, 215.

⁵A Week, 391-394.

⁶See I. A. Richards, Mencius on the Mind: Experiments in Multiple Definition.

⁷Note Thoreau's spelling of "Brahme"; probably, Thoreau has spelled it the way it is pronounced. At other places in Walden (for example, in "Conclusion"), the most frequently used spelling is "Brahma."

⁸See Chapter I of the thesis for discussion of Thoreau's principles of "simplicity" and "economy" in style.

⁹ Arthur Christy's comments (in his "Introduction" to The Transmigration of the Seven Brahmins, trans., Henry David Thoreau, xix-xx) on this particular passage deserves our special consideration: "So I, for one, cannot see the rustic and uninitiated Yankee in Thoreau . . . I find difficulty in understanding the following description [passage under reference] of the manner in which he spent a day at the Walden hut. . . There is a shadowy line between the things men sincerely believe and the things they use for artistic purposes."

¹⁰ Juan Mascaro, "Introduction" to The Bhagavad Gita, 28.

¹¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Thoreau," 446. Emerson further observes: "He praises wild mountains and winter forests for their domestic air, in snow and ice he would find sultriness, and commended the wilderness for resembling Rome and Paris. 'It was so dry, that you might call it wet.'"

¹² See Joseph Moldenhauer, "Walden: The Strategy of Paradox," in Walter Harding, ed., The Thoreau Centennial.

¹³ The Bhagavad Gita, op. cit., 56 and 57.

¹⁴ The etymological analogy of the "leaf" is described as follows: "Internally, whether in the globe or animal body, it is a moist thick lobe, a word especially applicable to the liver and lungs and the leaves of fat (. . . , labor, lapsus, to flow or slip downward, a lapsing; . . . , globus, lobe, globe; also lap, flap, and many other words); externally, a dry thin leaf, even as the f and y are a pressed and dried b. The radicals of lobe are lb, the soft mass of the b (single-lobed, or B, double-lobed), with the liquid l behind it pressing it forward. In globe, glb, the guttural g adds to the meaning the capacity of the throat." (W, 338)

¹⁵ A Week, loc. cit.

¹⁶ J. Lyndon Shanley, The Making of Walden, 80.

¹⁷ Both F. O. Matthiessen (American Renaissance) and Sherman Paul (The Shores of America) hold this view, which is also shared by many other critics. See John C. Broderick, "The Movement of Thoreau's Prose," American Literature, XXXI (March, 1961-January, 1962), 133-142; and Lauriate Lane, Jr., "On the Organic Structure of Walden," Approaches to Walden, 75-82.

¹⁸Matthiessen, op. cit., 169.

¹⁹In this connection, see R.W.B. Lewis, The American Adam, Chapter I and Frederic I. Carpenter, "'The American Myth': Paradise (to be) Regained," PMLA, LXXIV (1945), 599-606.

²⁰Matthiessen, op. cit., 166-167.

Chapter V

¹See Albert Hofstadter cited in Chapter I of the thesis.

²W, 360.

³Ibid.

⁴W, 359-360 for this and the subsequent images in this sentence.

⁵W, 359.

⁶William Blake in a letter to William Hayley, The Portable Blake, 183.

⁷See the Chapter on "Words and Sentences" of the thesis.

⁸Refer to the section on "Sentences" in Chapter II of the thesis.

⁹Ralph Waldo Emerson cited in Chapter III.

¹⁰See the discussion on the symbol of Walden Pond in Chapter III.

¹¹Emerson quoted in Chapter I.

¹²Ethel Seybold, Thoreau: The Quest and the Classics, 49.

¹³Ibid.

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